

THE GOD WE WORSHIP



2026 Spring Churchwides

2026 Spring Churchwide

The God We Worship

Why this study?

Our vision focus this year is Made to Worship. We desire our people to know the God we worship. We worship God for who he is. Our prayer is that our people will be enthralled by the Lord and drawn to him in glory.

Component Parts of the Churchwide Study

1. Sunday Worship Messages
2. Group meetings and material
3. Daily podcasts

January 18

Text: Exodus 3:1-17

Theme: Intro to the series. Who are you, Lord? Why do we worship the Lord? How knowing God can help us enjoy and worship him. We can know the Lord because he has chosen to reveal himself to us.

January 25

Text: Isaiah 6:1-8

Theme: The separateness of God; like nothing in our world. How knowing the Lord's purity makes clear our sinfulness. How God cleanses us.

February 1

Text: Genesis 18:1-15

Theme: How God is all-powerful and reigns over all of life. How the sovereignty of God enables us to trust that God can do what he promises.

February 8

Text: Hosea 2:16-23

Theme: What it means for God to love us.

February 15

Text: Exodus 5:22- 6:8

Theme: God is our redeemer; how he has saved his people. How he has saved us through Jesus.

February 22

Text: Job 42:1-6, 10-16

Theme: How God holds all knowledge and wisdom; how we see the wisdom of God at work in Jesus.

March 1

Text: Genesis 17:1-8

Theme: How God is from everlasting to everlasting; Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever.

March 8

Text: Exodus 34:1-9

Theme: Who God is and what his justice means; how Jesus brings justice into the world.

March 15

Text: Psalm 139:1-16

Theme: How God is present with us at all times. We live before the face of the one who knows us completely and loves us without wavering.

March 22

Text: Luke 15:11-32

Theme: How God is our loving Father, so willing to receive us when we have sinned, and ready to restore us.

Desires for our group meetings:

1. Participate in each session of the study. Being present allows us to grow together and build on what we learn along the way.
2. Take responsibility for your own learning. This means being willing to ask questions and seek the answers together. Your leader is meant to be more of a facilitator rather than a teacher. This makes it essential that everyone contributes to the group.
3. Listen actively to each other. This will allow us to benefit from each other's wisdom and insight. Here we will experience the presence of Christ in our midst.
4. Challenge the study's ideas and build on each other's ideas and thoughts.
5. Be willing to disagree lovingly, knowing this is how we get to the truth and learn to apply it.
6. Realize that Jesus is in our midst and become sensitive to the direction of the Spirit of God. Consider how God would have you take action as a result of what you learn each week.
7. Treat each other with respect in accordance with the Gospel. Encourage and pray for each other.
8. The best time for application and implementation is when our learning is fresh. Look for ways to apply it in your life right away. Remember, the goal is not only to build more knowledge but to grow in Christ.

Week 1 - Who Are You?

Getting Started

1. What were or are your parents like? How did your family form around who they are or were?
2. Who do you think God is? What is God like? What is he not like?
3. Why is what we believe about God important? How does our understanding of God shape the way we relate to him?
4. Today, we'll witness one of the most pivotal moments in Scripture—when God reveals his personal name and character to Moses, forever changing how his people would know and worship him.

Scripture Study - Exodus 3:1-17

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.” 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!” And Moses said, “Here I am.” 5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” 6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God. 7 The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.” 11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” 12 And God said, “I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.” 13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ Then what shall I tell them?” 14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses,

“Say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you. “This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. 16 “Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. 17 And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.’

The Encounter

5. What was Moses doing when the Lord appeared to him? What about his circumstances might have prepared him for this encounter?
6. Why did Moses turn aside from his normal duties to investigate the burning bush? What caught his attention?
7. What do you think God's choice of a burning bush—ordinary yet extraordinary—reveals about how he makes himself known?

Holy Ground

1. Why must Moses take off his sandals? What does this reveal about the nature of God's presence?
2. How does God make ordinary ground holy? What does this teach us about worship?

God Identifies Himself

1. Why does the Lord speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What does this continuity reveal about God's character? How does the Lord introduce himself to Moses?
2. How does Moses respond to being in God's presence? What does his fear reveal about understanding who God is?

The Meaning of the Name

1. Why does Moses ask to know the Lord's name? Why would knowing God's personal name be important for his mission?
2. What does the Lord reveal in sharing his name, "I AM WHO I AM"? What does this name tell us about God's nature and character?

3. How is this different from the names of other gods in the ancient world? What makes this revelation revolutionary?

God's Heart for His People

1. What does God say he has seen, heard, and felt about his people's suffering (verses 7-9)?
2. What does the phrase "I have come down" reveal about God's nature? How does this challenge ideas of God as distant or uninvolved?
3. What is God's purpose in revealing Himself to Moses? What does he intend to do for his people?

Moses' Commission

1. What command does the Lord give to Moses? Why do you think Moses questions his own adequacy for this task?
2. What assurance does God give Moses? How does "I will be with you" connect to God's revealed name?
3. Why must the liberation of the people result in worship of the Lord on this mountain? What does this teach us about the purpose of redemption?

From Redemption to Worship

1. How does our own redemption through Christ naturally lead us to worship the Lord?
2. What parallels do you see between God rescuing Israel from Egypt and God rescuing us through Jesus?

Application

1. **Understanding God's Character:** Based on Moses' encounter, what do we learn about the God we worship? How would you describe him to someone who doesn't know him?
2. **The Power of God's Name:** Why does knowing the personal name of the Lord open the way for us to worship him?
3. How does understanding God as "I AM"—the self-existent, eternal, faithful one—affect the way you approach him?

4. **From Distance to Intimacy:** How can we move from seeing God as far away and disengaged to experiencing the Lord as present and personally engaged with us? What practices or habits might help us cultivate awareness of God's nearness?
5. **Impact on Our Lives:** How should knowing God personally impact our prayers? Our worship? Our daily life with God?
6. **Worship as Response:** If redemption leads naturally to worship, how does your life reflect gratitude for what God has done for you?
7. What might it look like to worship God "on the mountain"—in the specific ways and places he calls you to respond to him?

Prayer

Father God, Lord of Hosts, thank you for revealing yourself to us. We could not know you apart from you making yourself known. We praise you that you are the great I AM—eternal, faithful, present with us. Teach us how to worship and enjoy you. Give us joy in our redemption, the joy that issues forth in worship. Help us to know you not as distant but as the God who comes down to rescue and restore. We pray in your name. Amen.

Week 2 - Holy, Holy, Holy

Getting Started

When have you experienced awe—a moment that left you breathless or overwhelmed? What was this experience like for you?

Scripture Study - Isaiah 6:1-8

Context: Isaiah prophesied during prosperous but spiritually complacent times. King Uzziah's 52-year reign brought stability, but the king's pride led to his downfall (2 Chronicles 26). At this pivotal moment of transition and uncertainty, God gave Isaiah a vision.

Read Isaiah 6:1-8

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. ² Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. ³ And they were calling to one another:

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty;
the whole earth is full of his glory."*

⁴ At the sound of their voices, the doorposts and thresholds shook, and the temple was filled with smoke. ⁵ "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." ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. ⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." ⁸ 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!"

The Encounter

1. What made this historical moment significant (v. 1)? Why might Isaiah and Judah need a fresh vision of God at this time?
2. In what context did Isaiah see the Lord? What does it mean that God is still enthroned even when earthly kings fall?

3. Describe the scene. What did Isaiah see? What was the symbolism of the seraphim and their actions?

God's Identity Revealed

1. How is God identified in this passage? What is revealed by the threefold announcement of "holy, holy, holy"? Why "holy" rather than "loving, loving, loving" or "powerful, powerful, powerful"?
2. What does it mean for "the whole earth to be full of his glory"?
3. How do the angelic beings reveal God's glory in their actions? What physical effects happened in the temple?

Isaiah's Response

1. How does Isaiah respond to the Lord's presence and glory? Why does he respond in this way? What realization has he had? How deep is his grief?
2. What does Isaiah's focus on "unclean lips" tell us about how God's holiness exposes our sin? Why unclean lips?

The Lord's Response to Isaiah

1. How does the Lord make it possible for Isaiah to be in his presence? What needed to be done?
2. What is symbolic about the cleansing Isaiah received? Where did the coal come from, and what did it represent? Why would this be both painful and a relief for Isaiah?

Isaiah's Commissioning

1. Why do you think the Lord commissions Isaiah immediately after his cleansing? What does this say about the Lord who is holy?
2. What is Isaiah's response to the Lord? What is he willing to do?

Application

The journey from Isaiah's vision moves through four stages: **encountering God's holiness** → **recognizing our sin** → **receiving God's grace** → **joining God's mission**. Let's consider how this pattern shapes our lives.

1. How does Isaiah's vision challenge or comfort you when life feels uncertain or unstable?
2. In what ways does worship reveal both who God is and who we really are?
3. How does encountering God's holiness lead to experiencing his grace? Why must they go together?
4. Through Christ, we can approach God's throne boldly (Hebrews 4:16). How does Jesus transform Isaiah's painful cleansing into our joyful confidence?
5. Isaiah's worship led to mission ("Here am I. Send me!"). What might God be calling you to, as you encounter his holiness this week?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Ask God to show you both his holiness and his grace in this season of your life.

Prayer

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty—you are high and lifted up, and the train of your robe fills the temple. We confess we are people of unclean lips living among people of unclean lips. Yet through Christ's sacrifice, the coal has touched our lips; our guilt is removed, our sin atoned for. Open our eyes to see your glory. Transform us in your presence. We hear you asking, "Whom shall I send?" May we answer with Isaiah, "Here we are, send us!" Use us for your purposes in the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Week 3 - Sovereign

Getting Started

Think of a time when God surprised you—when he showed up or worked in a way you didn't expect. What happened, and how did it impact your faith?

Scripture Study: Genesis 18:1-15

Context: God had already promised Abraham that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15). But years have passed. Abraham is now 99 years old, Sarah is 90, and they remain childless. In their culture, this was not just disappointing—it was devastating, a sign of God's disfavor. Now God appears again, not in a dramatic vision, but as a traveler seeking hospitality.

Read Genesis 18:1-15

The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day.² Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.³ He said, "If I have found favor in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by.⁴ Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree.⁵ Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."

"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

⁶ So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. "Quick," he said, "get three seahs of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread."⁷ Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it.⁸ He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

⁹ "Where is your wife, Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he said.

¹⁰ Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah, your wife, will have a son."

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.¹¹ Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing.¹² So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?"

¹³ Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?'¹⁴ Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

¹⁵ Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh."

But he said, "Yes, you did laugh."

The Encounter

1. What is surprising about the way God appears to Abraham? Do you think Abraham immediately recognizes he is being visited by the Lord?
2. Why do you think the Lord chose this ordinary setting—the heat of the day, the entrance of a tent? What does this reveal about how God meets us?

Abraham's Response

1. How did Abraham respond to his visitors? What does his urgency and careful attention reveal about him?
2. What did Abraham do to properly receive his guests? Notice the details—water, shade, bread, curds, milk, a choice calf. What does this level of hospitality cost him?
3. The text emphasizes speed: Abraham "hurried," told Sarah "Quick," and "ran" to the herd. Why do you think Abraham was in such a rush? What might this reveal about his heart?
4. Why does Abraham stand while they eat rather than reclining with them? What does this posture suggest?

God's Initiative

1. Why does the Lord ask for Sarah by name? What does this detail reveal about God's personal knowledge and purposes?
2. Why do you think Sarah listens from the tent entrance rather than joining them? What does this tell us about cultural practices and perhaps Sarah's own feelings?

3. Abraham does not ask the Lord for anything in this encounter. Why not? What does this teach us about God's initiative in our lives?

God's Promise

1. What specific promise does the Lord make to Abraham and Sarah? Why is the timing ("about this time next year") significant?
2. What was Sarah's response to the promise? What does her laughter reveal about her heart and her thoughts about the Lord's ability to act?
3. Why do you think Sarah was afraid when confronted about her laughter? What does God's gentle but honest response ("Yes, you did laugh") show us about him?

God's Sovereignty

1. How does God express his sovereign power in this passage? Why do you think he does so in the form of a question: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"
2. How will God prove that nothing is impossible for him? What will the birth of Isaac reveal about God's sovereignty over nature, time, and human limitations?

Application

God's sovereignty doesn't just mean he has power—it means he uses that power to keep his promises and accomplish his purposes, even when circumstances seem impossible.

1. What does it mean for God to be sovereign? How should this truth shape the way we approach impossible situations in our lives?
2. How does God's sovereignty humble us? How does it also give us confidence, peace, and hope?
3. Think about a current situation in your life that feels impossible or beyond hope. How might God's question to Sarah—"Is anything too hard for the Lord?"—speak to your circumstances?
4. Since God is sovereign, what is our part? How can we actively demonstrate our belief in God's sovereignty through the way we pray, wait, or act?
5. How is the coming of Jesus like the birth of Isaac—another "impossible" birth that fulfilled God's promise? How does Jesus' life, death, and resurrection strengthen our confidence in God's sovereignty?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment to identify one area of your life where you need to trust God's sovereignty more fully. What would it look like to truly believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord in this situation?

Prayer

O God of power and might, you are the Lord who keeps your promises. We confess that like Sarah, we sometimes laugh at what you promise because it seems impossible. Forgive our doubt. Teach us to trust you when the world seems chaotic and out of control. Help us to bring you our fears and our impossibilities. You are the God for whom nothing is too hard. Give us confidence in you so that we can live boldly and without fear, knowing you are sovereign over all. In the name of Jesus, who is himself your impossible promise fulfilled, we pray. Amen.

Week 4 - Love

Getting Started

What is the most powerful love relationship you have witnessed? What made this love so compelling or memorable to you?

Scripture Study: Hosea 2:16-23

Context: The prophet Hosea lived during a time when Israel had abandoned worship of the Lord and turned to Baal, the Canaanite god. God commanded Hosea to marry Gomer, a woman who would be unfaithful to him, as a living parable of Israel's spiritual adultery. Despite Gomer's repeated betrayals, Hosea was called to pursue and redeem her—just as God would pursue and redeem Israel. Our passage comes after God has described Israel's sin and announced judgment. But then, unexpectedly, God's heart is revealed.

Read Hosea 2:16-23

"In that day," declares the Lord, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.'¹⁷ I will remove the names of the Baals from her lips; no longer will their names be invoked.¹⁸ In that day, I will make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds in the sky, and the creatures that move along the ground. Bow and sword and battle I will abolish from the land, so that all may lie down in safety.¹⁹ I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.²⁰ I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord.

²¹ "In that day I will respond," declares the Lord—"I will respond to the skies, and they will respond to the earth;²² and the earth will respond to the grain, the new wine and the olive oil, and they will respond to Jezreel.²³ I will plant her for myself in the land; I will show my love to the one I called 'Not my loved one.' I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"

The Encounter

1. Why did God make the extraordinary request of Hosea to marry an unfaithful woman? Why was marriage the perfect metaphor for the relationship God desires with his people?

2. Hosea obeyed the Lord and married Gomer. What did Gomer do? How did her actions make Israel's betrayal of the Lord real and tangible?
3. In this passage, the Lord appears as the rejected husband. What does this reveal about God's character and his emotional investment in the relationship?

A Glimpse into the Heart of God

1. We would expect the Lord to pronounce final judgment and be done with his unfaithful people. What is the surprise in God's word through Hosea?
2. What does God want most? What is he willing to do to achieve it?
3. Notice the shift from "master" to "husband" (v. 16). What does this change in language reveal about the transformation God desires in the relationship?

God's Determination to Love and Restore His People

1. How will God restore his people? What specific actions will he take to make restoration possible (vv. 17-18)?
2. The word "betroth" appears three times in verses 19-20. What does this repetition emphasize? What qualities will characterize this new covenant?
3. How will God's love change not only the relationship his people have with him, but also transform creation itself (vv. 21-22)?

The New Relationship

1. What will be the nature of the new relationship God establishes with his people? What does it mean to "respond" and "acknowledge" the Lord (vv. 20-21)? How are these core characteristics of any loving relationship?
2. How will God reestablish his people in the land (v. 23)? What is significant about God showing love to "the one I called 'Not my loved one'"?
3. How will the people ultimately respond to God's pursuing love? What will they call him?

What God Reveals About His Love

1. What do we learn about God's love from this passage? Can it be stopped? Are there limits to its extent?
2. Does God demand that his people earn his love through perfect faithfulness? Is his covenant contingent on their performance? What does this reveal about the nature of grace?

How does what God has accomplished for us in Jesus Christ fulfill the ancient promises given through Hosea? (Consider: Jesus as the faithful husband to an unfaithful bride, the church.)

Application

God's love is not a feeling that comes and goes—it is an unbreakable covenant commitment that pursues us even when we run away.

1. How can the unchanging love of God for his people be a source of security and peace in your life right now?
2. When we fail God, how does he treat us? How do we know this from both Hosea and the cross?
3. God says to those called "Not my people," "You are my people" (v. 23). How are we to see ourselves now that we have been made God's children through faith in Jesus?
4. What does it look like to live with confidence in God's love for you? What would change in your daily life if you truly believed you are betrothed to God forever?
5. God's love for Israel moved him to pursue, redeem, and restore. How does experiencing God's pursuing love equip us to love others—even those who have hurt or betrayed us?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Ask God to reveal any area where you are struggling to believe in his unfailing love. Receive his promise: "I will betroth you to me forever."

Prayer

Our loving heavenly Father, we confess that we are like Gomer and like Israel—prone to wander, quick to turn away. We know our sin, and we are tempted to doubt your love. But you have shown us that your love never fails, never gives up. You have betrothed us to yourself forever in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. Enable us to live as those who have been loved by you with an everlasting love. Teach us to rest in your covenant commitment to us. In the name of Jesus, our faithful bridegroom, we pray. Amen.

Week 5 - Our Redeemer

Getting Started

Have you ever felt disappointed with God—that he let you down or didn't come through when you needed him? What happened, and how did you work through those feelings?

Scripture Study: Exodus 5:22–6:8

Context: God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and commissioned him to lead Israel out of Egyptian slavery. Moses obeyed, confronted Pharaoh, and demanded the release of God's people. But instead of freedom, Pharaoh responded by making their slavery even harsher—removing supplies while demanding the same quota of bricks. The people turned on Moses, and Moses turned to God with raw honesty about his disappointment and confusion.

Read Exodus 5:22–6:8

²² Moses returned to the Lord and said, "Why, Lord, why have you brought trouble on this people? Is this why you sent me? ²³ Ever since I went to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has brought trouble on this people, and you have not rescued your people at all."

6:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country."

² God also said to Moses, "I am the Lord. ³ I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the Lord I did not make myself fully known to them. ⁴ I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they resided as foreigners. ⁵ Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant.

⁶ "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. ⁸

And I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession. I am the Lord."

The Encounter

1. Why did Moses complain to God? What happened to precipitate Moses' bold challenge to the Lord?
2. How does the Lord respond to Moses' complaint? Does he rebuke Moses for his boldness, or turn him away? Why is God's response important for us to see?
3. What does this interaction teach us about bringing our honest questions and frustrations to God?

The Lord Reveals Himself to Moses

1. Why did the Lord choose this moment—when things seemed to be getting worse—to reveal himself more fully to Moses? Who does the Lord reveal himself to be (vv. 2-3)? Why is the connection to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob so important?
2. God says he appeared to the patriarchs as "God Almighty" but did not make himself fully known by his name "the Lord" (YHWH). What is different about the way the Lord is revealing himself to Moses and this generation?
3. Why does the Lord tell Moses that he has "heard the groaning" of his people and "remembered" his covenant (v. 5)? What does this language reveal about God's character?

God's Promise

1. What did the Lord promise to do to Pharaoh (v. 1)? How was this promise even bolder than Moses might have imagined?
2. How does this first promise reveal both God's sovereignty and his redeeming love working together?

The Nature of God's Redemption

How does the Lord describe the redemption he has planned for his people (vv. 6-8)? Notice the structure: four "I will" statements followed by purpose statements.

1. Let's examine the fourfold promise. What does each part mean, and what does it teach us about God's power and his love?
 - "I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."
 - "I will free you from being slaves to them."

- "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment."
- "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God."

2. What is the progression in these promises? How do they move from external deliverance to intimate relationship?

The Identity of a Redeeming God

1. What will Israel's redemption prove about God (v. 7)? Why is it significant that they will "know" the Lord through his acts of redemption?
2. How do we see that God's very character and identity are bound up with his redemption of his people?
3. How do we see this pattern even more clearly and fully at the cross of Jesus Christ?

Application

God doesn't just save us from something—he saves us to something. The pattern of exodus redemption points us to the greater redemption in Christ.

1. Moses felt free to confront God when the Hebrews were in distress. What does this teach us about the freedom we have to boldly approach God with our doubts and disappointments?
2. What does the redemption of the Hebrews—and our salvation at the cross—teach us about the character of the Lord?
3. How does the cross of Jesus open the way for us to enjoy an intimate relationship with the living God? How is Jesus our ultimate Redeemer?
4. Consider the fourfold promise to Israel. How does this pattern correlate to our redemption in Jesus Christ?
 - Brought out (from what?)
 - Freed (from what bondage?)
 - Redeemed (at what cost?)
 - Taken as God's own people (for what relationship?)
5. God promised Israel he would bring them to the Promised Land (v. 8). What part of God's promised redemption is still to come for us as believers? What should we be looking for?
6. How are we called to live now as a redeemed people—those who have been bought with a price and made God's own possession?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Reflect on what God has redeemed you from and what he has redeemed you to. Thank him for being your Redeemer.

Prayer

O God, our great Redeemer, thank you for drawing near to us in Jesus. You heard our groaning under the bondage of sin and sent us a Savior. You brought us out, freed us, redeemed us at the cost of your Son's life, and made us your own people. We rejoice in the freedom we have in Jesus and the new life we have been given in him. Teach us to trust in Jesus for life. Help us to focus our eyes on the fullness of redemption that you have promised—the day when you will bring us into our true home. Until that day, help us to live as those who have been redeemed, set free to serve you in joy. We pray together in the name of Jesus, our Redeemer. Amen.

Week 6 - Omnipotent

Getting Started

Why do you think we place such high value on knowledge in our world today? How does knowledge help us, and what are its limits?

Scripture Study: Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Context: Job was a righteous man who lost everything—his wealth, his children, his health—in a single day. He spent most of the book wrestling with the question: "Why?" His friends offered simplistic answers (you must have sinned), but Job knew he was innocent. He demanded an audience with God to present his case. Finally, God appeared—but not to answer Job's questions. Instead, God questioned Job, revealing the vast gap between divine wisdom and human understanding. Our passage captures Job's response after encountering the all-knowing God.

Read Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Then Job replied to the Lord: ² "I know that you can do all things; no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ³ You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.

⁴ "You said, 'Listen now, and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.' ⁵ My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. ⁶ Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

¹⁰ After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes and gave him twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ All his brothers and sisters and everyone who had known him before came and ate with him in his house. They comforted and consoled him over all the trouble the Lord had brought on him, and each one gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring.

¹² The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the former part. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. ¹³ And he also had seven sons and three daughters. ¹⁴ The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. ¹⁵ Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers.

¹⁶ After this, Job lived a hundred and forty years; he saw his children and their children to the fourth generation. ¹⁷ And so Job died, an old man and full of years.

The Encounter

1. What events led up to Job confronting the Lord (review Job 1-2 if needed)? Why was he so desperate to get answers from God?
2. Job's friends tried to help him make sense of his suffering. Why couldn't they help him? What mistake did they make in their approach?
3. When God finally appeared to Job (chapters 38-41), how did the Lord turn the tables on him? Why did God challenge Job with questions instead of providing answers?
4. What answer did the Lord ultimately give to Job's "Why?" questions? What was the Lord trying to teach Job?

Job's Response and Realization

1. What did Job realize after the Lord questioned him (vv. 2-3)? What did he see in God's nature that overwhelmed him?
2. Job confesses, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know" (v. 3). What is Job acknowledging about the limits of his knowledge and the extent of God's?
3. What do you think Job means when he says, "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (v. 5)? How has his relationship with God been transformed?
4. Why does Job say he "despises himself" and "repents in dust and ashes" (v. 6)? What is he repenting of? What does this reveal about encountering God's omniscience?

God's Nature Revealed

1. What does Job's encounter with the Lord reveal about who God is? How does Job see God differently now than he did before?
2. God never directly answered Job's question "Why did this happen to me?" Yet Job seems satisfied. What has changed for Job that makes the lack of specific answers acceptable?

The Aftermath

1. What does Job's prayer for his friends (v. 10) reveal about how his encounter with God has changed him? How has his suffering and God's revelation transformed his character?

2. What does the restoration of Job's life (vv. 10-17) show us about God? How does this ending reveal that God is not only all-knowing and all-powerful, but also all-loving?

Application

1. At what times in your life have you most wanted answers from God—your own "Why, God?" moments? What did you do during those times?
2. How can the discovery that God is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving help us when we face unanswered questions and unexplained suffering?
3. Job longed to understand why he suffered. How does the coming of Jesus—his incarnation, suffering, death, and resurrection—help answer questions like Job's about God's character and purposes?
4. How does God's omniscience give us comfort when painful events unfold in our lives? What difference does it make to know that nothing surprises God or escapes his notice?
5. Job moved from secondhand knowledge ("my ears had heard") to firsthand encounter ("my eyes have seen you"). What would it look like for you to move from knowing about God to truly knowing God?
6. How can we apply Job's example in practical ways when we face suffering or confusion—especially when God doesn't give us the explanations we want?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Reflect on what you've learned about God through this study. Consider how your understanding of God has grown. Thank him for revealing himself to you—not just in knowledge, but in relationship.

Prayer

Omniscient and loving Father, you know all things—the number of hairs on our heads, the secrets of our hearts, the mysteries of the universe, and the future yet to unfold. There is so much in our world and our lives that we do not understand. Like Job, we long for answers. But more than answers, we need you. Open our eyes to who you are so that we can live in peace, even when we don't understand. Help us to trust not in our own knowledge but in your perfect wisdom. Thank you for revealing yourself to us through your Word and ultimately through Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Week 7 - Everlasting

Getting Started

What most makes you aware of the passing of time? As you've grown older, what is something you used to be able to do but can no longer?

Scripture Study: Genesis 17:1-8

Context: Twenty-four years have passed since God first promised Abram that he would have descendants as numerous as the stars. Abram is now 99 years old, and Sarai is 90. They are still childless. In the intervening years, Abram tried to fulfill God's promise through his own efforts—taking Hagar as a concubine and fathering Ishmael. Now God appears again, not to rebuke Abram for his failure, but to renew and expand his promise. This time, God reveals a new name for himself and gives Abram a new name and identity.

Read Genesis 17:1-8

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.² Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, ⁴ "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. ⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸ The whole land of Canaan, where you now reside as a foreigner, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."

The Encounter

1. How old was Abram when the Lord appeared to him this time? Does it seem strange that God would restate his promise when Abram is 99 years old? Why do you think God chose this moment?
2. How does the Lord introduce himself to Abram (v. 1)? What is the significance of the title "God Almighty" (El Shaddai)?

3. God calls Abram to "walk before me faithfully and be blameless." What does this reveal about the relationship God desires? How does this relate to God's eternal nature?
4. Why do you think Abram fell facedown before the Lord (v. 3)? What did this posture express?

The Promise

1. God's promise here echoes earlier promises made to Abram (Genesis 12, 15). What is different in the way God articulates it this time? Why are these differences significant?
2. What does God reveal about himself through the covenant he makes with Abram (v. 7)? How can God make an "everlasting covenant"? What must be true about God for him to do this?
3. God promises that "kings will come from you" (v. 6), yet there would not be any kings among Abraham's descendants for over 500 years. What does this reveal about God's nature and his relationship to time?

Abram's New Name

1. Why does the Lord give Abram a new name? What does this act say about God's authority over Abram and about God's character?
2. Why "Abraham" specifically? Why give him this name now, before he has even one legitimate son? How are both Abraham's identity and God's promise gathered up in this new name?
3. God speaks in the past tense: "I have made you a father of many nations" (v. 5). How can God speak of something future as if it has already happened? What does this teach us about God's eternal perspective?

Into the Future

1. How does God project his promise far into the future (vv. 7-8)? What will happen long after Abraham is gone from the earth?
2. What is so important about the Lord saying he will be "your God and the God of your descendants after you" (v. 7)? How might this promise have given Abraham peace and comfort?
3. How is it possible for the future to be present to God? What does this reveal about the Lord's relationship to time? The word "everlasting" appears twice in this

passage (vv. 7-8). What is the connection between God's eternal nature and his ability to make everlasting promises?

Application

We live in time—watching ourselves age, seeing things change and pass away. But we serve an eternal God who stands outside of time and makes promises that span generations.

1. How do you deal with the impermanence of life? Do you often think about your mortality or what will happen in the generations after you're gone?
2. How does having an eternal God who makes everlasting promises help us when we see so much around us changing and passing away?
3. Just as Abram received a new name and identity, how has God in Christ given us a new identity? How would you describe it? (Consider: 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 2:10, 1 Peter 2:9-10)
4. Hebrews 13:8 declares that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." How should this truth impact who we are and what we do with the days God has given us?
5. How does God's eternal nature give us peace about eternity—and about our own eternity? How does the promise of eternal life for all who come to Jesus by faith make that possible?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Consider that the eternal God knows you by name, has entered into covenant relationship with you through Christ, and holds your future securely in his hands.

Prayer

Eternal God, you are the Ancient of Days, without beginning or end. You have drawn near to us in Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Everything around us is passing away—our strength fades, our world changes, time marches on—but you are eternal and unchanging. Your promises span generations and reach into eternity. Thank you for giving us a new identity in Christ and for making an everlasting covenant with us through his blood. Help us to rest in the knowledge of who you are and in your precious promises. Give us peace about the future, both in this life and in the life to come. We pray in the name of Jesus, who holds all time in his hands. Amen.

Week 8 - Justice

Getting Started

Have you ever experienced injustice—either personally or witnessed it happening to someone else? How did it affect you?

Scripture Study: Exodus 34:1-10

Context: This encounter happens after one of Israel's greatest failures. While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the people grew impatient and built a golden calf to worship. Moses came down from the mountain, saw their idolatry, and in his righteous anger broke the stone tablets containing God's law. Israel had violated the covenant immediately. The people deserved judgment and abandonment. Yet God calls Moses back up the mountain. What will God do with a people who have so quickly betrayed him?

Read Exodus 34:1-10

The Lord said to Moses, "Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I will write on them the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. ² Be ready in the morning, and then come up on Mount Sinai. Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. ³ No one is to come with you or be seen anywhere on the mountain; not even the flocks and herds may graze in front of the mountain."

⁴ So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like the first ones and went up Mount Sinai early in the morning, as the Lord had commanded him; and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands. ⁵ Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. ⁶ And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, ⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."

⁸ Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped. ⁹ "Lord," he said, "if I have found favor in your eyes, then let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, forgive our wickedness and our sin, and take us as your inheritance."

¹⁰ Then the Lord said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the Lord, will do for you."

The Encounter

1. What were the Lord's instructions to Moses before they met on the mountain (vv. 1-3)? What had happened before that left the relationship between the Lord and his people in serious question?
2. By asking Moses to cut two new stone tablets, what was the Lord signaling? What does this act of renewal reveal about God's character?
3. Why was it important that Moses go before the Lord alone? Why was no person or animal to be allowed on the mountain?

God's Self-Revelation

1. How did the Lord appear to Moses (v. 5)? What does the cloud signify about God's presence?
2. Moses already knew the Lord and had met with him before. Why did the Lord choose this moment to proclaim his name and character to Moses?
3. This is one of the most important passages in Scripture for understanding God's character. Notice what God says first and what comes later. What does the order reveal about God's priorities?

The Lord's Self-Description

1. How does the Lord describe himself to Moses (vv. 6-7)? List the attributes God proclaims. What stands out to you?
2. What does it mean for God to be "compassionate and gracious"? How do these qualities relate to his justice?
3. God is "slow to anger" and "abounding in love and faithfulness." What does this reveal about God's patience and the magnitude of his love?
4. God "maintains love to thousands, and forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin." How extensive is God's mercy? Why is the scope important?
5. Yet God "does not leave the guilty unpunished" (v. 7). How does God reveal that he is also the God of justice? Why is this aspect of God's character essential?
6. How can both the compassion and justice of God be found equally in him? Why must they coexist? What would be wrong with a God who had only one without the other?

Moses' Response

1. How does Moses respond to God (v. 8)? What does his immediate worship tell us?
2. Moses knows his people are "stiff-necked"—stubborn and rebellious. Given what God has just said about not leaving the guilty unpunished, what is Moses' concern?
3. What does Moses ask for on behalf of the people (v. 9)? What is the only way the relationship between God and his people can work?
4. How does the Lord respond to Moses' plea (v. 10)? What does God promise to do?

Application

God's justice and mercy are not competing attributes—they are both expressions of his perfect character. At the cross, they meet completely.

1. What does God's justice include? How does biblical justice encompass both moral accountability and care for the vulnerable and oppressed?
2. Why must we depend on the justice of God in our world? And why must we also trust in the love of God? Why is neither dispensable?
3. How do God's justice and compassion meet perfectly in Jesus at the cross? What is the result for those who belong to Christ?
4. Jesus' death satisfies God's justice. Why is his death a calling to live lives of obedience rather than an excuse to live as we please?
5. If we are to take the justice of God seriously, how should we then live? What does pursuing justice look like in practical terms—in our relationships, our communities, our world?
6. God is "slow to anger" yet does not leave sin unpunished. How should this balance shape the way we respond to injustice—both personally and systemically?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Consider areas where you need to trust God's justice—situations where wrongs have not been made right. Also consider where you may need to participate in God's work of justice—caring for those in need, standing against oppression, or pursuing righteousness.

Prayer

Lord God, you reign as judge over all the earth. You are compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Yet you do not leave the guilty unpunished—you are perfectly just in all your ways. Remind us that we can trust your faithful justice, even when we see injustice all around us. Thank you that in Jesus, your justice and compassion meet—that at the cross, mercy triumphs over judgment without compromising righteousness. Lead us to the obedience that comes from faith. Enable us to join you in the work of justice you are doing in the world—caring for the poor, defending the needy, and pursuing what is right. We pray in the name of Jesus, in whom justice and peace kiss. Amen.

Week 9 - Omnipresent

Getting Started

When have you most sensed God's presence with you? What made those moments stand out?

Scripture Study: Psalm 139:1-18

Context: We don't know the exact circumstances that prompted David to write this psalm. He may have composed it while fleeing from King Saul, when he desperately needed assurance of God's presence during a time of isolation and danger. Or perhaps he wrote it in his old age, reflecting on a lifetime of experiencing God's constant presence through triumph and failure, glory and shame. Either way, this is not abstract theology—it's the testimony of someone who has lived in the reality of God's inescapable presence.

Read Psalm 139:1-18

You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. ² You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. ³ You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. ⁴ Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. ⁵ You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. ⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. ⁹ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, ¹⁰ even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. ¹¹ If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," ¹² even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.

¹³ For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. ¹⁷ How precious to me are your

thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them! ¹⁸ Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand—when I awake, I am still with you.

David's Personal Encounter

1. How can we see that David's song is personal and not theoretical? How is it experiential rather than merely intellectual? Why does this distinction matter?
2. How would you describe David's experience of God? Is God aloof and disinterested in David? How do we know?
3. David begins with "You have searched me, Lord, and you know me" (v. 1). What does it mean that God has "searched" David? What does this reveal about God's intentional engagement?

God's Knowledge of David

1. Why is David overwhelmed by the Lord's knowledge of him (vv. 2-6)? What specific details does God know about David?
2. God knows David's thoughts "from afar" and his words "before a word is on my tongue" (vv. 2, 4). What is most surprising to David about God's knowledge? What does this reveal about God's nature?
3. David says such knowledge is "too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain" (v. 6). How does God's complete knowledge of us humble us? How does it also comfort us?

God's Presence with David

1. David asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?" (v. 7). Is David trying to escape God or marveling at the impossibility of doing so? What's the tone here?
2. David explores every conceivable location—heaven, depths, dawn, far side of the sea, darkness (vv. 8-12). Is there anywhere he could escape God's presence? Why not?
3. What does it mean for the Lord to "hem me in behind and before" (v. 5)? What does it mean for the Lord to "lay your hand upon me"? Are these images of constraint or protection?

God Oversees David's Life

1. Where was God when David was being formed in his mother's womb (vv. 13-15)? How does David describe what God did? What does this intimate language tell us about God's personal engagement?
2. God's involvement began before David's birth and extends through "all the days ordained for me" (v. 16). How has God been at work throughout David's life story—past, present, and future?
3. What about death and beyond? Will David ever be outside the Lord's presence (v. 18)? Why is this important to David?
4. David says God's thoughts toward him "outnumber the grains of sand" (vv. 17-18). What does this reveal about the constancy and intensity of God's attention to David?

Application

God's omnipresence means we are never alone, never forgotten, never outside his care. But it also means we can never hide our sin or escape his gaze.

1. What is your honest response to the truth that God is always present with you—knowing your thoughts, seeing your actions, aware of everything about you? Does this give you comfort or fear? Why?
2. It may be difficult for us to believe God sees us as he saw David—as precious, wonderfully made, constantly on his mind. How does Jesus give us confidence to know this is true for us?
3. How does God's presence with us and his intimate engagement in our lives reveal his glory? How does it also remind us that we matter deeply to God?
4. How should knowing God's constant presence affect the way we live our daily lives—our choices, our habits, our priorities?
5. For those who are suffering or lonely, what comfort does God's omnipresence offer? For those who are struggling with hidden sin, what warning does it sound?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Ask God to make you more aware of his presence with you—not just in this moment, but in every moment of your life. Thank him that you are never alone.

Prayer

Ever-present Lord, there is no place where we can flee from your presence. You knew us before we were born. You know our thoughts from afar and our words before they are

spoken. You hem us in behind and before; your hand is upon us. Help us to be mindful that you are always with us—in our triumphs and our failures, in our joy and our sorrow, in the light and in the darkness. Give us comfort in knowing your presence and your love. Remind us that we can always come to you, always seek your face, and you will hear and respond. Thank you that in Jesus, your presence became flesh and dwelt among us—and that through your Spirit, you remain with us always. We pray in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us. Amen.

Week 10 - Father

Getting Started

What was your experience with your father growing up? How has that experience shaped—either positively or negatively—your view of God as Father?

Scripture Study: Luke 15:11-32

Context: Jesus faced constant criticism from religious leaders for associating with "sinners"—tax collectors, prostitutes, and others considered unclean. In response, Jesus told three parables about things that were lost and found: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son(s). This final parable is Jesus' most complete picture of God's heart toward sinners. It's often called "The Parable of the Prodigal Son," but it might better be titled "The Parable of the Loving Father" or even "The Parable of the Two Lost Sons," since both sons are far from understanding their father's heart.

The Setting (Luke 15:1-2):

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Read Luke 15:11-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹

I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ *"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'*

²² *"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.*

²⁵ *"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'*

²⁸ *"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'*

³¹ *"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.*

³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

The Setting for Jesus' Parable

1. Jesus often kept company with "sinners." Why did the religious leaders criticize him for this?
2. How does Jesus respond to their criticism? Why does he answer with parables rather than direct confrontation?
3. This parable is often called "The Parable of the Prodigal Son." Why might "The Parable of the Loving Father" or "The Parable of the Two Lost Sons" be better titles?

The Character of the Father

1. How does the father respond when his younger son demands his share of the estate (v. 12)? What is surprising about his response? (In that culture, this request essentially said, "I wish you were dead.")
4. The father sees his son "while he was still a long way off" (v. 20). What does this detail suggest about the father's longing and watchfulness?
5. What do the father's actions reveal about his heart? Consider each one:
 - Running to his son (undignified for a patriarch in that culture)
 - Throwing his arms around him and kissing him
 - Giving him the best robe (sign of honor)
 - Putting a ring on his finger (sign of authority)
 - Putting sandals on his feet (sign of sonship, not servanthood)
 - Throwing a feast with the fattened calf (reserved for the most special occasions)
6. The father declares, "This son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (v. 24). What do these words reveal about the depth of the father's grief and joy?

The Two Sons

1. What is surprising about the older son's response (vv. 28-30)? What does he fail to do that reveals his attitude toward both his brother and his father?
2. Notice the older son's language: "I've been slaving for you" and "this son of yours" (vv. 29-30). What do these phrases reveal about how he sees his relationship with his father and brother?
3. How do both sons run from the father—the younger one who leaves home and the older son who stays? In what ways are both lost?
4. How does the father express his love differently to each son? What does each son need to hear?

Jesus' Audience

1. Who do the tax collectors and sinners identify with in the story? Who do the Pharisees and religious leaders identify with?
2. What is Jesus trying to teach each group? What does each need to understand about the Father's heart?

The Ending

1. Does Jesus complete the parable? Why does he leave the story unresolved—with the older son still outside?
2. What is the challenge to each son? How do you think Jesus wanted his listeners—both the sinners and the Pharisees—to respond?

Application

God is not a distant judge or a stern taskmaster—he is a loving Father who runs to embrace us, who celebrates our return, and who freely shares all he has with his children.

1. Do you identify more with the younger son or the older son? Or have there been times when you've lived like the younger son and other times like the older son?
2. How does this parable help us see the love our heavenly Father has for us? What do you think Jesus most wants his listeners to understand about the Father? What makes this difficult for some people?
3. Do you grasp the joy of the father when the younger son returns home? Do you believe that your heavenly Father rejoices over you in this way?
4. The father tells the older son, "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours" (v. 31). How does this truth address our tendency to relate to God through performance and earn his favor?
5. How does the work of Jesus establish us in this loving relationship with God as our heavenly Father? How does the cross demonstrate both the Father's love and make our adoption possible?

Closing Reflection

Take a moment of silence. Ask God to reveal whether you've been living more like the younger son (running away) or the older son (dutifully serving without joy). Then picture the Father running to you, embracing you, and saying, "You are my beloved child. Everything I have is yours."

Prayer

Abba, Father, you have loved us with an everlasting love and drawn us with your loving kindness. Through Jesus, you have made us your children and given us the Spirit of adoption. Forgive us when we run from you like the younger son or serve you joylessly like the older son. Enable us by your Holy Spirit to grasp how high and long and wide and

deep your love for us is. Help us to believe that you rejoice over us, that you run to embrace us, that everything you have is ours through Christ. Teach us to live in your love and rest in your fatherly care. We pray in the name of Jesus, who makes us sons and daughters. Amen.



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