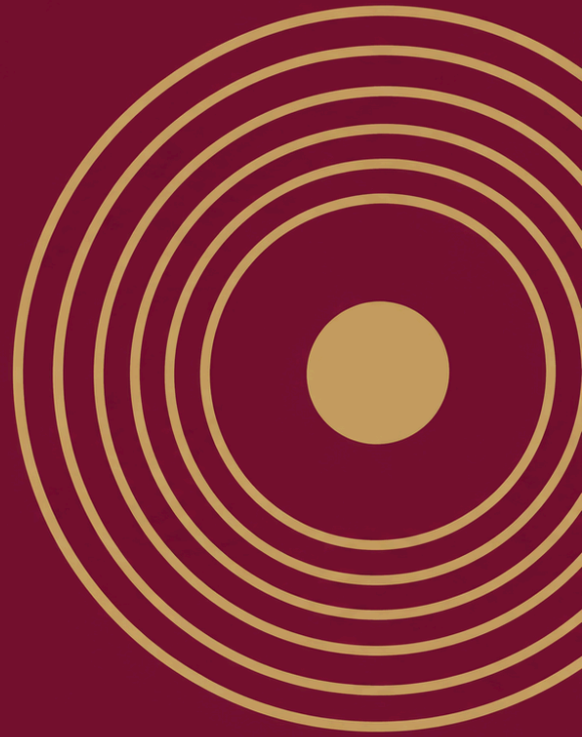


BIBLE STUDY

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Always on My Mind

This week we will learn about the attribute of God called omniscience. Not only will we come to understand what this means but also realize how this impacts our personal lives.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 139:1-6

Ken Jennings surprised the nation as he won 74 consecutive games on the show Jeopardy. However, in the Ultimate Tournament of Champions, Jennings only came in second place to another former winner named Brad Rutter. This made Rutter the biggest financial winner in game show history, with Jennings following close behind. Ken Jennings, despite all of his Jeopardy wins, did not know the answer to every question (or should I say the question for every answer since it is Jeopardy). Why were we amazed by the victories of Ken Jennings yet we are often not in awe of the omniscience of God? Omniscience is defined in the dictionary as "one having total knowledge." Only the Lord qualifies. He is an expert on every topic matter. Jeopardy would be an easy task. He has all knowledge. That means he does not learn anything new. God knew about computers, jet planes, and ipods when Adam and Eve were trying to learn how to sew fig leaves together in the Garden of Eden. How awesome is the mind of God. What does the omniscience of God have to do with us on a personal level? God, who is aware of the placement of every star in the universe, knows you. Read Psalm 139:1-6.

1 O LORD, you have searched me 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 know it completely, O LORD. 5 You hem me in—behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.

Verse 1: To be known by an omniscient God makes sense. He would have to know us for He knows everything. But what makes this truth so wonderful is the first part of the verse, "O Lord, You have searched me..." It is like an artist looking at His masterpiece. It may not be finished yet but He sees what it will be. He smiles enjoying the process of making every detail perfect. It is His obsession. That is how God views you. He knows you for He created you. He searches you because he enjoys being continually involved in your life. To be known by God is not to have someone just know the facts of who you are: eye color, height, weight, age (you cannot lie to God about this one). He goes beyond the facts and into the details of feelings, personality, likes and dislikes, experiences, dreams, and fears. Every part of who you are is known by God. He sees what you hide from everyone else and hears what you do not say aloud. That is the God who searches you.

Verse 2-4: Every action and even the motivation behind the action is known by God. Each thought is heard by God. Nothing is hidden from Him. He even knows how you will react to situations, your nervous tendencies, the sound of your laugh: He is familiar with all your



ways.

Verse 5: God created you. Because you are His masterpiece, He keeps His hand on you. Even when you are not holding His hand, He holds onto you. Isn't that comforting? God, who knows our frailties and weaknesses, our sins and rebellion; holds onto us like we are His prize. That is an amazing truth.

Verse 6: We cannot grasp the omniscience of God but we can allow this truth to grasp us. We can trust an all-knowing God with our lives since there is so much we do not know. He will lead us into becoming the masterpiece He designed us to be.



DAY 1

Application

Take time to praise the Lord for His omniscience. Thank God for knowing you completely.

How does it feel to be known completely by God?

How will understanding the omniscience of God change your life?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Jeremiah 1:1,4-6

God is omniscient. Before time began, He knew about time. The Lord also knew when He would create time. God knew when, how, and where to form the universe. Before the earth came into existence, He knew every person who would be born, every attribute they would have, everything they would do and say, and ultimately when and how they would die. God knows everything. Thinking through the attribute of God's omniscience can leave one feeling lost in the crowd of generations of people also known by God. The personal connection can seem severed by all the facts. Yet, in the midst of the crowd, God knows you by name. The Lord has a special plan for you designed especially for you by the Creator Himself. One example of this truth is found in the Old Testament book of the Bible called Jeremiah.

1 The words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiah, one of the priests at Anathoth in the territory of Benjamin... 4 The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 5 "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations."

Verse 1, 4-5: Jeremiah was an ordinary guy. He was the son of "one of the priests." He was not the main leader, just one of the group. He did not stand out in a crowd. We can discern from a later verse in this same book of the Bible that he was not a man of courage or strength.

6 "Ah, Sovereign LORD," I said, "I do not know how to speak; I am only a child."

Verse 6: Big baby. That is what Jeremiah was. He did not have much confidence in himself so I doubt others had it for him either. Yet, God chose Jeremiah to be a prophet, a spokesman for the Lord Himself. Jeremiah was not chosen for his skills or experience. Instead, he was chosen before he was born. God set Him apart for His purpose. Before time began, God looked through the generations and said, "I pick Jeremiah to be a prophet for My team." That is what Jeremiah became, a prophet. However, Jeremiah had a responsibility. Before this moment in time, Jeremiah did not know God had called him to be a prophet. Jeremiah was faithful in staying connected with the Lord. He was in a place of readiness to receive the Word of God. We must stay connected to God in order to be ready to receive the parts of His knowledge that the Lord chooses to share with us. Because God is omniscient, we who know so little must listen to His direction in our lives. We are responsible to be ready to respond to the omniscience of God.



DAY 2

Application

Pray and ask God how you can be ready to receive God's Word into your life.

Do you believe that God created you for a purpose? If so, do you know what that purpose is at this point of your life?

How can you be ready to receive God's Word for your life?

How does understanding God's omniscience affect our plans for our lives?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 29:13-16

13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men. 14 Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish." 15 Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the LORD, who do their work in darkness and think, You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, "He did not make me"? Can the pot say of the potter, "He knows nothing"?

These verses warn us of what could happen if we no longer live in the awe and wonder of the omniscience of God. We push aside the fact that He sees us and in our rebellion we continue in our sin. Often we no longer are bothered by the separation from the Lord. We can even go through the motions of spiritual actions and have no remorse in our hearts.

Verse 13: We can sing the worship songs, we can bow our heads for prayer, we can even speak "God talk" and still be living in sin. Our secret rebellion may not be perceived by anyone around us. They may even consider us "spiritual". Yet, God knows. He sees the empty worship and He is not pleased.

Verse 14: God will go to great depths to show us our foolishness. We will realize our "wisdom" and "intelligence" was nothing but a deception of ourselves. We can never hide our evil from God. Everything we have covered up will be exposed for what it is and then it will suddenly be taken from us.

Verse 15: If we then continue on our paths of sin, we will have to work harder to cover our evil. More sins will be committed: lying, manipulation, cheating, and other sins; all to hide our rebellious ways.

Verse 16: Sadly, we eventually believe that we have fooled everyone, including God. We forget that we are His creation and that He knows us better than we know ourselves. And instead of running to God for knowledge and truth, we trust ourselves into foolishness. We must live in the awareness of the omniscience of God. This will keep us honest and humble before Him. Also, it gives us the only true perspective on our lives. God is all-knowing so He can lead us into decisions which will benefit us. On our own we walk towards sin and destruction. We must rely on Him.



DAY 3

Application

Confess your pride in your own “knowledge”. Ask our omniscient God for His wisdom to guide you in every aspect of your life.

How can we deceive ourselves?

When we are living in sin, what causes us to hide from God?

How can we protect ourselves from exalting our knowledge above God’s?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Samuel 1: 1-7, 10-11, 20; 2:3

Have you ever been tormented? Maybe it was an obnoxious boss, or a nagging sibling, possibly a demanding friend. Did you feel that the pain would go on and on and never end? A woman in the Bible experienced emotional pain by an enemy. Strangely enough, the enemy was her husband's other wife.

1 There was a certain man from Ramathaim, a Zuphite from the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Elkanah son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite. 2 He had two wives; one was called Hannah and the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none. 3 Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the LORD Almighty at Shiloh, where Hophni and Phinehas, the two sons of Eli, were priests of the LORD. 4 Whenever the day came for Elkanah to sacrifice, he would give portions of the meat to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters. 5 But to Hannah he gave a double portion because he loved her, and the LORD had closed her womb. 6 And because the LORD had closed her womb, her rival kept provoking her in order to irritate her. 7 This went on year after year. Whenever Hannah went up to the house of the LORD, her rival provoked her till she wept and would not eat.

In Hannah's day having a child meant a woman was blessed by God. In other words, to not have children was considered a curse. Hannah already felt pain by her situation so the provoking by Peninnah just added to the torment. Hannah took her broken heart to the Lord.

10 In bitterness of soul Hannah wept much and prayed to the LORD. 11 And she made a vow, saying, "O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant's misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son, then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head."

God heard her prayer and answered her request.

20 So in the course of time Hannah conceived and gave birth to a son. She named him Samuel, saying, "Because I asked the LORD for him."

Hannah remembered her vow to the Lord. She took her son, Samuel, to Eli the priest. She dedicated the boy to the Lord so that he could serve in the temple. Then, she begins to pray. In the middle of her prayer she says:

3 "Do not keep talking so proudly or let your mouth speak such arrogance, for the LORD is a God who knows, and by him deeds are weighed.



Verse 3: Peninnah had been proud of all her children and had tormented Hannah for having none. In the midst of that former pain was the comfort, "...the Lord is a God who knows". The Lord knew that Hannah was suffering because of Peninnah. Are you hurting? God knows. Are you fed up? God knows. Is your heart broken? God knows. He sees your pain and He knows who or what is causing it. You are not alone. There is Someone else who knows. In His timing, He will deal with the situation. For now, find comfort in the fact that God knows.



DAY 4

Application

If you are going through a difficult time, pour out your heart to God. It will help you to share your pain with Him. He will listen to you.

How does the attribute of God's omniscience help us during difficult times?

If God already knows, why do we need to tell Him about our situation?

Are you suffering through a difficult time right now? Write a prayer to God about it.



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Jeremiah 33:1-3, Proverbs 3:19-20, James 1:5, Colossians 1:9

1 While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the word of the LORD came to him a second time: 2 "This is what the LORD says, he who made the earth, the LORD who formed it and established it—the LORD is his name: 3 'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.

Verse 1: We met Jeremiah earlier this week. He was a prophet chosen by God. Not everyone appreciated the Word of God being proclaimed in the land of Israel. The king of Judah, Zedekiah, had Jeremiah imprisoned. This was not the best of times for the prophet. However, he was not alone. The God who knew Jeremiah's situation, spoke the Word to him.

Verse 2: The Lord is the creator of the earth. He is powerful and creative. God formed everything we see and put it all in its proper place. Not one detail was overlooked.

19 By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place; 20 by his knowledge the deeps were divided, and the clouds let drop the dew.

Verse 19-20: The omniscience of God allowed Him to create the universe! If He can handle all of that, then surely His knowledge can benefit us. However, we need to learn how to access it.

Verse 3: In verse 3 of Jeremiah chapter 33, we learn how to gain access to the knowledge of God. We must ask for it. The Lord is willing to share with you. He is not a know-it-all who laughs at your ignorance. God wants you to be filled with His knowledge. This truth is plainly shown in James 1:5.

5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

All we have to do is ask. God is willing to answer our request not only for ourselves but for others as well.

9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. (Colossians 1:9)

We have access to the omniscience of God. He is willing to share His knowledge with us. In order to receive this, though, we must be willing to ask and then to listen to His answer.



DAY 5

Application

It is awesome to know we serve an omniscient God, but it is also amazing that He is willing to share knowledge with us. Often we do not take the time to ask God to give us His wisdom. Confess this in your own life and ask God to teach you how to stop and ask for His wisdom.

What do you think about the fact that you could receive the knowledge of God?

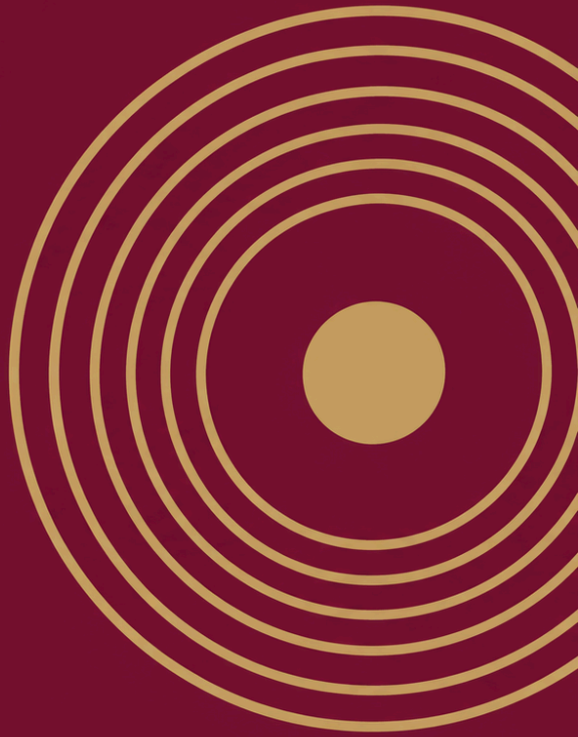
When have you asked for God's wisdom?

How will you apply yourself to receive knowledge?

Who can you pray for to receive more of the knowledge of God?

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Everybody Wants To Rule The World

Justice: an attribute of God that is often overlooked. Yet, the Scripture is full of references to this important aspect of God. This is a powerful term that impacts not only our present life but also eternity. This week we will delve deeper into the implications of the justice of God.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Romans 6:23

Before we can understand justice, we must understand the law. This week will begin with the basics: The Ten Commandments. Most of us have heard of these laws. They have recently been in the media spotlight as lawyers seek to have copies of The Ten Commandments removed from public arenas. Often, these public places are court houses. Why were these commandments placed in these judicial houses? American law is based on these commandments. These laws that were given thousands of years ago are still the foundation of all modern law. Our hundreds of laws and statutes can be boiled down to these Ten Commandments:

Exodus 20:1-17

1 And God spoke all these words: 2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. 3 "You shall have no other gods before me. 4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 6 but showing love to a thousand {generations} of those who love me and keep my commandments. 7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. 8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. 12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. 13 "You shall not murder. 14 "You shall not commit adultery. 15 "You shall not steal. 16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. 17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

Verse 1-17: These were the laws that God spoke. He created these commandments to govern His people. This was the basis for judging right and wrong. It was no longer based on personal opinion or preference. These commands allowed the people to know their boundaries in life. To break these laws caused sin against a holy God and caused social



disruption within the community. These laws provided the basis for government. Justice, then, is upholding what is right (defined by the law) and condemning what is wrong (defined by breaking the law). A person who does not break the law receives justice by not coming under condemnation. A transgressor of the law receives justice by being condemned under the law. The law is the standard by which justice is administered. Thus, justice is fair for its standard is the law, which is equal to all. In other words, true justice is not swayed by race, gender, socio-economics, or background. Since the law is static, and justice carries out the law, then everyone should receive justice in the same way. However, we know that this is not true in our legal system. We often see the innocent proclaimed guilty and the guilty declared innocent. Or, we see the same crime punished in different ways depending on the defendant. In this unfair way of upholding the law, justice is not administered, but instead personal preferences of the court is carried out. This, of course, negates the entire purpose of the law which was to create a standard that was equal for everyone in order to govern the people. God's law, however, was established by Himself in His perfect state. Thus, the law is perfect for He proclaimed it. By forming the law, He also set up a system for the law to be enforced. Law is powerless in governing society if it is not enforced. If no one ever received a ticket, then who would obey traffic laws? So, law in itself does not cause people to follow the rules. Instead, the enforcement of the law, the justice, brings people to obedience. Yet, whether the enforcement of the law is practiced, one who breaks the commandments is still a lawbreaker. The lawgiver, God Himself, knew that only He Himself could perfectly enforce the law. Thus the creator of the Ten Commandments is the very one who upholds their standard. He has chosen the punishment and it is strictly enforced. No one can escape His justice. Since all of us have broken a commandment, that means we are all lawbreakers. The judgment will be executed on us for all of us are under the law.

Romans 3:19-20

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.
20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Verse 19: We are all under the law. We have nothing to say in our defense. Our verdict is guilty and the defense is silent. We are accountable to the Lawgiver as well as the Enforcer of Justice, the Judge. We are not righteous. As soon as we broke one law, we are a criminal. Another term for this is sinner. We have sinned, broken the law. As a fellow sinner to another, let me tell you the verdict is in "Guilty" and the sentence is "Death".

Romans 6:23a

23 For the wages of sin is death...



The wages of sin is death. As a lawbreaker, that is what you deserve. We have all sinned. That is why we all die. Death is heart-wrenching for it is a punishment for our lawlessness. It is a depressing and overwhelming event for it is a constant reminder of our fallen, evil ways. Something inside us cries, "This is not how it should be". And you are right. God created us in righteousness. Adam and Eve lived in perfection for a time. But when they broke God's law, sin and death entered the world. Because God is just, when sin entered the world, punishment of sin had to come with it. The punishment is fair. Everyone is held to the same standard. Your race, socio-economic status, gender or background does not preclude you from the consequences of your lawlessness. The justice of God is equal and all encompassing. God is just. He has always been just. He will always be just. The law makes us aware that we are not just. We are lawbreakers. We are sinners. Because we are criminals, we are held accountable. Death is our sentence. God is just. Yet, somehow His justice devised an amazing plan. He knew we deserved death. The death was beyond physical death, even though we are all subject to it. There is also a spiritual death, an eternal separation from a holy God. Criminals cannot roam free. We need to have our record wiped clean. So, a just, God sent His perfect Son to earth. His Son, Jesus, never sinned. He was never a lawbreaker. This means He was righteous. So, the only one who did not deserve to die was killed on a cross. On that cross, He became the payment for our crimes. He received the punishment that we deserved. He literally took our place. When we put our faith in Him, He takes away our criminal record and gives us His righteousness. Justice has been served on the cross. We do not have to pay for our crimes for eternity. Instead of eternal death, we can have eternal life. The criminal can now roam heaven as a free citizen with no record. In fact, let's look at all of Romans 6:23, not just the first half:

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What did we owe for our crimes? Death. What did the just God give us? Eternal life. How is this obtained? Only through Christ Jesus our Lord. He can set us free from the penalty we deserve. Justice was served on a wooden cross by a perfect God.



DAY 1

Application

Think about God’s justice in your life. Because justice was obtained for you on the cross, you are spared (if you have faith in Christ) from paying an eternal debt. Ponder all that you deserved and praise God for giving you His Son’s righteousness.

Summarize how the laws and justice work together.

Describe how it feels to realize that you are a lawbreaker who deserves eternal death. How is this realization different from the way you usually view yourself?

How does understanding the justice of God make the cross even more meaningful to you?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Daniel 9:4-14

Daniel 9:4-14

4 I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. 7 "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. 8 O LORD, we and our kings, our princes and our fathers are covered with shame because we have sinned against you. 9 The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; 10 we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. 11 All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you. "Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. 12 You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing upon us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. 13 Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. 14 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

Verse 4-5: God keeps His covenant with His people. He has promised to love us and He does and He will. His love, however, does keep in perfect step with His justice. When we have sinned, His love and justice is still shown to us. The consequences that are given to us for breaking His law does not negate His love. Because we are disobedient, we cannot get angry at God for holding us accountable.

Is this not true for any parent? You love your child yet you will punish them for their disobedience, their transgression of your laws. Does that mean you no longer love them? No, it is actually the opposite. Out of your love for them you punish your child so that they will learn their lesson and next time choose the right way to go. The same is true with our Heavenly Father. He loves us and His love is a part of His justice just as His justice is a part of His love.



Verse 6: The justice of God involved the warning of God. He did not see His people transgress an unknown law. Instead, He had warned them of the coming judgment. He sent prophets who spoke His Word to the people. The prophets proclaimed that if the people did not repent from their wicked ways, they would suffer the consequences. The people refused to listen and they were punished.

Verse 7: God was right in what He did. If a son of a judge had to stand trial, the only right thing for the judge to do is to enforce the law against His son. This did not mean the judge had lost His love for His son. God loved His people but He was right in executing judgment. The shame of the consequences was not in God but in the people. They could not blame God for punishing their wrongdoing.

The punishment that the Jews received was removal from their land. They had been living in Israel but they were conquered by other kingdoms. They were forcibly removed from their country and were relocated in the foreign lands.

Verse 8: The punishment for their sins was equal. The kings received the same consequences as the common family man. God is just, His punishment is equal.

Verse 9-10: The justice of God does not remove His mercy and forgiveness. They are still available. Even in the middle of your punishment you can receive His pardon. That does not mean your consequences are removed. The people were not suddenly transported back to Israel the day Daniel prayed (even though later on some of the people were allowed to return). However, the mercy was available. When you sin, do not confess your sins in hope that the consequences of your sin will be removed. That will not happen. Instead, confess your sin to receive the cleansing of the sin itself. The transgression will be removed from your record even though the consequences from your action may remain. The fact that you receive mercy for sinning against God is more grace than you deserve.

Verse 11-13: The nation of Israel had broken the law of God. They made the choice to sin. They were not ignorant of what they had done wrong. They knew what God required of them yet made the decision to live life on their own terms and in their own way. They refused to obey the commands of God. The Lord had warned them of the punishment. In fact, at the beginning of Israel's history, hundreds of years before in the Law of Moses, God had told them this:

Leviticus 26:33

33 I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins.

Israel had been warned. They knew the ultimate consequence yet they broke the law. Sadly, even despite the consequences, Israel did not turn back to God. The Lord had punished His people but they were not learning from the consequences.



Often, God punishes us. He is just in doing so. Yet, we are too busy focusing on getting out of the consequences, or blaming God and others, or ignoring the problem that we miss learning the lesson God is teaching us. We need to turn from our sin and dig into the truth, the Word of God.

Verse 14: In punishing our sins, God is right. He will carry out His justice. Will we learn from it or continue in transgressing the law? God never changes. However, we have the opportunity to be reformed. We must choose to do so.



DAY 2

Application

Think through the justice of God in your life. Thank Him for His justice and love shown to you for He is your heavenly Parent.

What lessons can we learn from the prayer of Daniel?

How can the justice of God relate to His love and mercy?

Does God always give us warnings of impending judgment?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 73

The justice of God, just like all of His attributes, is timeless. He has always and will always possess this quality. He is justice. He is the embodiment of justice. He is the perfect example of justice. His justice is complete. There is no escaping His judgment. He will judge the world. He alone has the right to judge the world for He created the world, created moral law, and is capable of enforcing the law. Every person will be held accountable.

Sometimes, though, we look around the world and wonder when the judgment will take place. We see people get away with crimes. We watch evil people prosper. We hear about cruel tyrants who oppress their people. We wonder, "What is the point of doing what is right when it seems the sinners get to enjoy the good life?" We are not the first to ask this same question. A man named Asaph asked the same thing thousands of years ago.

1A psalm of Asaph. Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. 3 For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. 4 They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. 5 They are free from the burdens common to man; they are not plagued by human ills. 6 Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. 7 From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits. 8 They scoff, and speak with malice; in their arrogance they threaten oppression. 9 Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. 10 Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. 11 They say, "How can God know? Does the Most High have knowledge?" 12 This is what the wicked are like—always carefree, they increase in wealth. 13 Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence. 14 All day long I have been plagued; I have been punished every morning. 15 If I had said, "I will speak thus," I would have betrayed your children. 16 When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me 17 till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny. 18 Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. 19 How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! 20 As a dream when one awakes, so when you arise, O Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. 21 When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, 22 I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. 23 Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. 24 You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. 25 Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. 26 My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. 27 Those who are far from you will



perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. 28 But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Verse 1-3: God had been good to Israel. However, Asaph stopped focusing on the goodness of God and instead began looking around at the world. He saw the prosperity of the wicked and began to envy their wealth. Previously, he had stood firm on the goodness of God in his life. But as soon as he took his eyes off God and placed them onto others, he fell into sin. He almost completely lost his grip on the reality of life for he became more obsessed with the material world.

Verse 4-5: Asaph began not only noticing the possessions of others but also began looking at the people themselves. From the outside looking in, it seems that these people have it all together. They have no problems. They look good. They live good. Everything they have is good. The Good God of Israel is no longer in the picture. Instead the “good life” of others is all that is in Asaph’s view.

Verse 6-12: The more he gawks at them, the more of reality he sees. These people are evil. They are proud, violent, arrogant, calloused sinners. They live for themselves. They conceive evil without any concern for consequences. They oppress people in word and action. They belittle others in order to set themselves up on a pedestal. Sadly, people come to them in adoration and praise. They believe they are above the law of God and that He is harmless to their evil ways. They continue to grow in sin without regret.

Verse 13-16: As Asaph continues to compare himself to the wealthy wicked, he gets depressed. He throws a pity party and he is the guest of honor. He does not “count his blessings” but instead he “counts his miseries”. Like a scratched CD, he is stuck on everything that has ever gone wrong in his life. He does not speak to anyone about his dilemma. So, he wallows in it. Finally, however, he brings His concern to God.

Verse 17: In the presence of God, he realizes the truth. His viewpoint is lifted from the here and now and brought to rest on eternity.

Verse 18-20: They are on slippery ground. They are the ones who truly will fall in the end. They will be judged by God. He will cast them to ruin and destruction. The judgment they will receive will be frightening. It will also happen without notice and will take place suddenly. They will be forgotten forever. All the fame they increased on earth will be brought to nothing. All their wealth will not be able to save them. Their punishment will be complete. It will take place in God’s time.

Verse 21-26: When we take our eyes off of God and focus on this world, we think and act in despicable ways. We become what we hate. We treat God the same way as unbelievers. How quickly our lives can be turned away from God. Yet, He is so faithful to us. He stays with us even when we are having a love affair with the world. He leads us back into His ways. There we realize how temporary our life is and that all things of the world will pass away. We are



heading to heaven. Each day brings us one day closer to glory. Why look at things which will one day melt away? Our eyes should be looking to eternity where we will behold Jesus face to face. He is all that we need. Our material possessions, our bodies, our reputations are nothing that will last. Only the ways of God will stand firm forever. Let go of the temporal. Invest in the eternal.

Verse 27-28: The justice of God will occur. He will punish the wicked. But until that time, you have a choice. Will you look toward the world and envy it or will you look to God and long for Him? He alone is the refuge from the judgment on the wicked. Realize this truth. The wicked will be judged. You are not to envy the wicked but to warn them. Tell them of God. Let them begin to envy you and your peace in these difficult days in which we live. May you lead them to salvation so that they, too, may find refuge in God from His judgment.



DAY 3

Application

Confess any envy you have in your life. Thank God that He never lets go of your hand even when you are trying to chase the world.

How do you envy the wicked?

How can we turn from envy to evangelism?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Revelation 19:11-21

The Book of Revelation proclaims the judgment which will be poured out on the earth during the tribulation. The tribulation is a term for the seven years proceeding the return of Christ as King reigning over the earth. These seven years are marked by God inflicting punishment on a world that is in open rebellion against His law. The verses we will study are the last event of the tribulation, at the end of seven years.

Revelation 19:11-21

11I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. 17And I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried in a loud voice to all the birds flying in midair, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, 18so that you may eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, small and great." 19Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur. 21The rest of them were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds gorged themselves on their flesh.

Verse 11-13: Heaven is opened up. We are given a picture of Jesus. Really study this picture. It is so different from the one we usually have in our heads. Often the paintings of Jesus show Him as a waif. He looks so thin that you are afraid He might fall over if there was a good wind. If that is how you think Jesus is like, get ready for the truth of Him in heaven. Ladies, He is a knight in shining armor on a white horse. He is called Faithful and True. What a nickname! You're often labeled with your attributes: funny, cranky, moody, etc. Jesus is Faithful and True. You can count on Him. He is always the same yesterday, today, and



forever. You can trust Him for He is always honest. Guys, you'll like this: "With justice He judges and makes war." Jesus is the best court room drama (by the way, Jack Nicholson, He can handle the truth) and He is an action movie all rolled up into One! How does He handle all this? With justice. He does not condemn people or fight them just because He has had a bad day. He does all of this with justice. How does He look? His eyes blaze like fire. Can you imagine having God look at you? He would burn through all your pretenses and cut straight to the heart of you. He has many crowns on His head for He alone deserves to rule. The people on earth are in rebellion against the only One who belongs on the Throne! Ladies, back to you. Jesus is mysterious. He has a name on Him that only He knows. A name that no one has blasphemed. A name that no person has used to manipulate others. A name that has never been denied or questioned. Guys, only you can appreciate this: he is dressed in a robe of blood. Talk about intimidating! The Word of God is powerful. He is a Person. He is alive, active, and amazing. Remember that when you study the Word!

Verse 14: For any of you who ever desired to live out a video game, your chance is coming. Christ could conquer the world Himself, yet He is going to let us ride with Him. We will be the John Wayne of heaven! We will be looking good in our fine, white, clean linen. We will be grateful for the fact that it was the blood covering from Jesus that has enabled us to be riding with Him in judgment instead of being the receivers of our rightful punishment.

Verse 15-16: The sword, the judgment of God, is released. The Word of God is the law of God which is enforced by God. This is the time for "The Enforcer" and He is coming to take over. He will rule the world as the King. No one will be able to compare to Him. His judgment will be with fury and wrath. It will be complete. When a King conquers, He takes over completely.

Verse 17-18: This is a visual picture of the judgment of God being complete. There will be no more punishment inflicted at this time. All the people who are still in rebellion against God will be judged. There will be no bias on prestige or position. Justice will be equally applied to all.

Verse 19: War against Jesus. War against His ways. War against His Word. War against His people. This takes place today. The war may not be with actual weapons but it takes place within the heart. People are at war with God.

Verse 20-21: Justice is served. The wrath of God is poured out and rightfully so. For He is Faithful and True even in His judgment. Picture with me this scene. Thousands of bodies lay in a field. Blood is oozing out of the corpses. Birds are ripping flesh off their bodies. The birds have blood dripping from their mouths. Gouges are left in the skin of the deceased. Am I grossing you out? This is nothing compared to the picture of hell. Those who are at war with God right now are facing an eternity of judgment. The justice of God will be poured out on them. You may know someone who right now stands under the reality of God's future judgment on their souls in hell. Will you tell them about the Rider on the horse? Will you tell



them about the Faithful and True, the Word of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords? Will you tell them about the robe of blood that He wore before it was stripped from Him so they could hang Him naked on a wooden cross? Will you explain to them that He received the justice of God poured out on Him so we do not have to have the justice poured out on us? Instead of facing torment, we can look forward to riding triumphantly wearing white robes: clean robes, washed because of the blood of Christ.



DAY 4

Application

You deserved hell. Yet, God, through His gift of Jesus gives you eternal life in heaven. Praise Him for this amazing gift.

Do you believe that heaven and hell is real? If so, what are their purposes?

If we believe in heaven and hell, how can we live out the reality?

Do you struggle with the concept of hell? Why do you think that is?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 20:28, Romans 3:21-26

Justice often evokes images of crime and punishment. Yet, that is only one side of justice. For those living within the laws of the land, it is an image of safety and security. If we are victimized, we want to know that the guilty will be condemned. If we follow the laws, then we want to be ensured that we will live in safety from prison. For those who live in obedience, justice is a sweet comfort, protecting us even when we do not realize it.

Isaiah 42:1-4

1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; 4 he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his law the islands will put their hope."

Verse 1: One of the most amazing titles of Jesus is Servant. The King of kings humbled Himself to come and serve us. His service involved the ultimate sacrifice.

Matthew 20:28

28...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The one who did not receive justice, the innocent Lamb who was slaughtered on a cross will be the instrument of God to bring justice to all the nations. By the power of God the justice of God will be brought to all the earth.

Verse 2: The justice of God will not be forced upon anyone for they are under His justice whether they believe it or not. The justice of God does not come by a sudden riot. The justice of God has always been in existence. This attribute of God always was and always will be. However, the evidence of His justice will become more apparent as the nations are brought under His justice.

Verse 3: The justice of God is not oppressive. He does not wish to break us. He will not take us hurting and wounded from the injustices of life and then painfully inflict His justice on us. Instead, His justice will actually care for us. He is faithful to us in our need. His justice actually will bring us healing. How is that possible?



Romans 3:21-26

21But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Verse 21-26: We were not right. We had broken the law. But the Law and Prophets, the Word of God, testified about a way for us to be justified before God. By having faith in Jesus, we sinners are justified by grace. This means that our transgressions are no longer held against us. Instead, our punishment was inflicted on Jesus. God is just, the price of sin had to be paid. Jesus made the payment, He took our place. We were on death row and He opened up the door and set us free while He was executed in our stead. That is how justice can bring us healing. Look back in Isaiah 42:3 again.

Verse 3: We had no hope in ourselves. We were bruised reeds and smoldering wicks, so Jesus served us by taking our place. He was bruised for us and His life was snuffed out. But in this He was faithful to Himself for justice had to be carried out. Justice had to be inflicted on us or Him. He chose Himself to save us.

Verse 4: The justice that was carried out on the cross will continue to be proclaimed throughout the earth. Over time, more and more people will accept by faith His work on the cross so that they will be established in His justice. He is and will be the hope for the world.

Not only do we see the kindness of His justice in our hearts, but we will actually live under His justice. His law will be world law. One day, when He returns to earth, He will rule every nation. Every person will know that justice will be faithfully carried out in every aspect of their lives. Then, and only then, will there be peace on earth.



DAY 5

Application

Spend time in praise of the Servant who died for us in order that we may be justified before God.

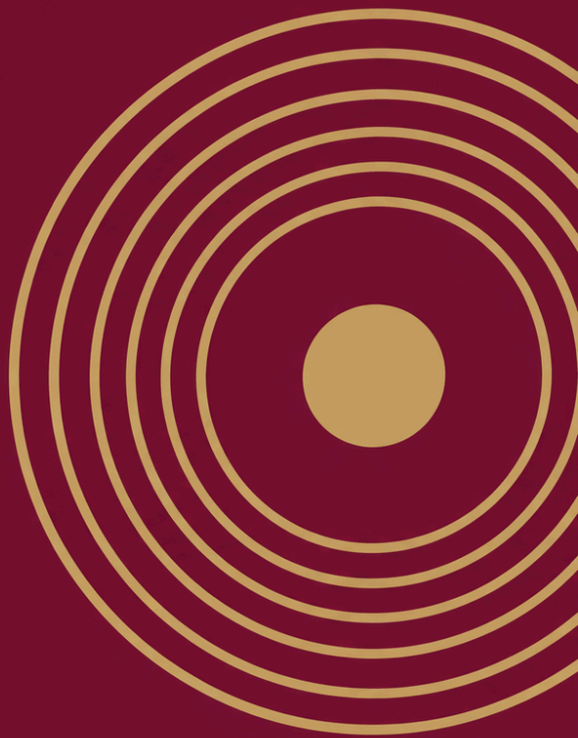
How has your view of justice changed this week?

What will the world be like when Christ reigns?

How has justice changed your life?

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Eye of the Tiger

Anger: Usually when we discuss anger, we speak of it as a negative attribute. Yet, Scripture tells us that God gets angry. It also clearly shows what makes Him mad. This week we will learn about the fact that the anger of God is right and how we, too, should feel this righteous anger.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Proverbs 6:12-14, 16-19; 21:4

The anger of God stems from what He hates. Did you know that God hates? It is very clear in His word what invokes the hatred and anger of God and that is sin.

Proverbs 6:16-19

16 There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

Verse 16: The writer of Proverbs is summarizing the sins that God hates. The book of Proverbs was written to give instruction, to help people become wise in every aspect of life. It is wise for us to know what the Lord hates so that we can protect ourselves from sinning against Him.

Verse 17: God hates haughty eyes. Haughty means proud. Remember the saying, “the eyes are the window for the soul”? (Refer to Luke 11:34) In other words, haughty eyes reflect a proud heart. You cannot have one without the other. In fact, later in Proverbs, these characteristics are proven to go together.

Proverbs 21:4

4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin!

God hates pride. We are not to be arrogant or conceited. We are not to brag on ourselves. We are not to exalt ourselves and to then look down on other people. We are not to trust in our own abilities, intellect, emotions for this leads to pride. Do you have haughty eyes?

God hates lies. They are detestable to Him. Out of the Ten Commandments, it was number nine that told us not to lie. Notice that God does not have “degrees” to lies. We say, “It was only a white lie, or a slight exaggeration, or a little misleading”. With God, it is either true or not. It cannot be somewhat true. It is a black and white issue in God's eyes. You are either an honest person or a liar. Which are you?

God hates hands that shed innocent blood. When we hear a news story about a person who was killed in robbery or a gang shooting that hit a bystander or riots that get out of control or doctors that abort babies, often our hearts break, sympathizing with the innocent. We are not alone in how we feel. Please realize that God hates it as well. It makes Him mad.

Verse 18: God hates when we devise wicked schemes. We are not to plan for evil. Even if we justify it and think, “I would never really do that”, for even the thoughts themselves are



despised by God. We never need to dwell on sin. Anything not of God is wicked, so whether the thoughts are violent, sexual, vengeful, manipulative, mean, greedy, etc.: they are wicked. When we are scheming, we are planning to do something in our own way and in our own strength. This is not trusting God. Besides that, it is blasphemy to think thoughts which go against God's ways. What plans have you devised that go against the ways and purposes of God?

God hates feet that quickly run to evil. They are the people who purposely embrace what is wrong. They know the right way to go, but they turn around and head in the wrong direction. They do so with gusto, not taking time to consider the consequences. They are consumed with the evil. This is what takes place when people are caught up in any sin. I am not only referring to the common addictions: alcohol, drugs, sex, pornography; but also the ones we run quickly to that we never even acknowledge as wrong: gossip, off-colored jokes, insensitivity, manipulation, laziness, short-temperedness, and so many more. These are the habits that we quickly run to in our every day lives. We may be so used to them that we do not even recognize how quickly we go there. What sin do you quickly commit?

Verse 19: God hates a false witness. This is a person who purposely testifies against someone else. This cannot only occur in a legal court room but in our everyday conversations. When someone's name is brought up, you do not mind shedding a negative light on them, which could possibly skew another person's view about that particular "someone". Have you ever been a false witness in a conversation?

God hates people who stir up trouble. This expression is further explained in some other verses from Proverbs.

Proverbs 6:12-14

12 A scoundrel and villain, who goes about with a corrupt mouth, 13 who winks with his eye, signals with his feet and motions with his fingers, 14 who plots evil with deceit in his heart— he always stirs up dissension.

Verse 12-14: This means that someone will use both verbal and non-verbal forms of communication to bring dissension between others. I have seen children who will ask one parent for something, and the parent will say "no". Then they will ask the other parent and they will say "yes". Then the parents end up fighting about their different reasons behind their answers and the child in the end gets her way. I have seen youth helping to keep their friends in a fight so that they look like the "better" friend to both sides. I have seen adults pin co-workers against each other in order to illicit information from both parties. God hates all of this. How have you stirred up trouble for others?

The text today was straightforward. You knew what each of these sins meant when you read about them. Yet, to read something and then apply it is very different. I hope that today's reading helped you to evaluate your life and to see if there is anything you are doing that God hates.



DAY 1

Application

Confess any sin that God showed you today.

At the end of the paragraphs was a personal evaluation question. Write down your answers here.



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 6:9-22; 7:1, 4-5, 17-18, 23-24; Ephesians 2:1-3

God hates sin. His hatred of sin leads to His anger. The anger leads to His judgment of sin. The hatred and anger are always followed by the action of punishment. God will not allow what He hates to continue. His timing for His justice may seem like a long time to us, but He shows His anger and wrath according to His perfect plan. He proceeds the outpouring of His judgment after He has given time for repentance. That is how His anger and love can still work together. Today, we will see the evidence of this truth in the life of a man named Noah.

Genesis 6:9-22

9 This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. 10 Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. 11 Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight and was full of violence. 12 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. 13 So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out. 15 This is how you are to build it: The ark is to be 450 feet long, 75 feet wide and 45 feet high. 16 Make a roof for it and finish the ark to within 18 inches of the top. Put a door in the side of the ark and make lower, middle and upper decks. 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish. 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark—you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. 19 You are to bring into the ark two of all living creatures, male and female, to keep them alive with you. 20 Two of every kind of bird, of every kind of animal and of every kind of creature that moves along the ground will come to you to be kept alive. 21 You are to take every kind of food that is to be eaten and store it away as food for you and for them." 22 Noah did everything just as God commanded him.

Verse 9: Out of the entire world, only Noah was found to be blameless. Note that not even his wife or his sons were commended, only Noah. He was truly alone in a corrupt world. What kept him from evil? He chose to walk with God.

Verse 11-12: The entire earth was corrupt. How did it become corrupt? The people had chosen to corrupt their ways. Friends, it is always a choice. They had chosen to sin, to do what God hates, Noah had chosen to walk in God's ways. We cannot blame environment, parenting, friends, education, etc. It is time for us to take personal responsibility for what we



have done wrong. The choice was ours.

Verse 13: When we are obedient to God, He shares with us His plans. Here, the Lord tells Noah His plan to destroy the earth. Imagine how this felt to Noah. God has just said that your friends, your relatives, your neighbors will be destroyed. Noah knew how corrupt the world was. He witnessed it day in and day out and yet chose to not become entangled in the corruption. Imagine how he felt. We are so familiar with this story that we forget that this was a real person who experienced this. While Noah is in a state of shock and wonder (and possibly questioning if he would also be killed in all this), God shares with him a redemption plan.

Verse 14-18: Noah would be saved in an unusual way. He was to build an ark, or an extremely large boat. This is God extending mercy in judgment. Yes, the hatred for sin and the anger caused by sin would be clearly shown, but so was the grace, mercy, and love of God. This was not only extended to Noah but to his family as well. In 2 Peter 3:5, Noah is called a “preacher of righteousness”. So it is possible that he was proclaiming the truth to the people but they refused to listen. They ignored the mercy, grace, love, and salvation of God.

Verse 19-22: All of the plans that God told Noah including building the ark, bringing animals into the ark, storing up provisions of food for everything on board was obeyed fully by Noah. By his obedience, not only was his family saved but the human species itself was able to survive. Noah was obedient so he received the protection of God. The rest of the world received the wrath of God.

Genesis 7:1, 4-5, 17-18, 23-24

1 The LORD then said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and your whole family, because I have found you righteous in this generation...

4 Seven days from now I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights, and I will wipe from the face of the earth every living creature I have made." 5 And Noah did all that the LORD commanded him

17 For forty days the flood kept coming on the earth, and as the waters increased they lifted the ark high above the earth. 18 The waters rose and increased greatly on the earth, and the ark floated on the surface of the water....

23 Every living thing on the face of the earth was wiped out; men and animals and the creatures that move along the ground and the birds of the air were wiped from the earth. Only Noah was left, and those with him in the ark 24 The waters flooded the earth for a hundred and fifty days.

Verse 1, 4-5: The righteous and his family were saved. The unrighteous received the wrath of God. An entire generation was wiped out because of their choice to do what God hates.



Only one followed God's commands and was saved.

Verse 17-18: As the ark rose to safety, how did Noah's family feel? I can't imagine them celebrating as they realized people around them were dying. The anger and wrath of God is not something we relish. Instead, it should make us reflect. I wonder if Noah's sons realized that they were not called righteous by God, that only their dad received that title. Did they think of all the reasons they did not deserve to be saved? Did they realize how close they were to being drowned themselves?

The hatred of sin and anger of God, should not give us cause to rejoice when others "get what they deserve". For you see, all of us deserve the wrath of God. This is not reserved for just the "really bad". Each of us has committed sin. Each of us has done something God hates. Each of us deserves to be drowned in the wrath of God.

Ephesians 2:1-3

1As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

How do we escape the wrath of God? There was another object made of wood that saves us. Noah had the ark. We have the cross. Noah had to trust that the ark would float, which took great faith considering he had never seen a boat before and its size was massive! We, too, must have faith in the One whom we have not seen with our physical eyes and who carried the weight of our massive sins. But the cross does save. It will carry us safely from eternal destruction to eternal life.



DAY 2

Application

Ponder the hatred and anger of God towards sin. Realize that your nature was an object of wrath. Praise God that saved you from yourself.

If sin leads to incurring the wrath of God, why do we treat it so lightly?

Why is the topic of sin not readily discussed?

How should we be “preachers of righteousness” in a corrupt world?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 78:12-22, 43-51

Psalm 78:12-22

12 He did miracles in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt, in the region of Zoan. 13 He divided the sea and led them through; he made the water stand firm like a wall. 14 He guided them with the cloud by day and with light from the fire all night. 15 He split the rocks in the desert and gave them water as abundant as the seas; 16 he brought streams out of a rocky crag and made water flow down like rivers. 17 But they continued to sin against him, rebelling in the desert against the Most High. 18 They willfully put God to the test by demanding the food they craved. 19 They spoke against God, saying, "Can God spread a table in the desert? 20 When he struck the rock, water gushed out, and streams flowed abundantly. But can he also give us food? Can he supply meat for his people?" 21 When the LORD heard them, he was very angry; his fire broke out against Jacob, and his wrath rose against Israel, 22 for they did not believe in God or trust in his deliverance.

Verse 12: The Jewish nation had been enslaved in Egypt for 400 years. God released His people from bondage through a display of amazing wonders, commonly known as the ten plagues. These plagues are explained in further detail later on in this psalm.

Psalm 78:43-51

43 the day he displayed his miraculous signs in Egypt, his wonders in the region of Zoan. 44 He turned their rivers to blood; they could not drink from their streams. 45 He sent swarms of flies that devoured them, and frogs that devastated them. 46 He gave their crops to the grasshopper, their produce to the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hail and their sycamore-figs with sleet. 48 He gave over their cattle to the hail, their livestock to bolts of lightning. 49 He unleashed against them his hot anger, his wrath, indignation and hostility— a band of destroying angels. 50 He prepared a path for his anger; he did not spare them from death but gave them over to the plague. 51 He struck down all the firstborn of Egypt, the firstfruits of manhood in the tents of Ham.

Verse 43-51: All of these plagues were inflicted onto the Egyptian people while Israel received no effects from them. The people were a witness to the power of God's wrath on the Egyptians and the power of God's protection for them.

Verse 13: The culminating miracle was when the Red Sea was parted in two. The Jews walked through the walls of water on dry land. When the Egyptian army followed, the sea



crashed down on them. The enemies of the Jews were defeated, while the Hebrews were preserved.

Verse 14: The miracles continued as they traveled through the desert. First of all, they were led by a pillar of cloud by day and a light from fire by night. They had the visual Presence of God in their camp. They could actually see the cloud and the fire. This had never occurred before. This is an amazing miracle. I wonder what it looked like. I always picture a tornado type cloud that sent cool breezes to the people in the desert during the day. At night, I wonder if it looked like a huge bonfire that warmed the entire camp against the chill. I do not know. All I do know is that there was an overwhelming visual image of God in their midst that no one could ignore or deny.

Verse 15-16: Besides the physical Presence of God Himself, the Lord was conducting miracles on their behalf. God allowed water to flow where there had not been water. Imagine being extremely thirsty. You look down at a dirty rock. You pray for water and suddenly water pours out from the rock. Not a trickle of water, mind you, but it gushes with pure, clean stream water. Would you be amazed? Would you worship? Would you believe God could do anything?

Verse 17-20: The nation of Israel responded with complaints. After witnessing all the miracles of God, they continued in sinful rebellion. They grumbled and murmured. They dared God to provide for them in the way they wanted, not believing He could. They were saying, “Sure, God made water flow from a rock. Big deal. We want what we want and we want it now. God is not really all that powerful. Is He?”

They had seen the plagues of Egypt. They had walked through a sea. They had a pillar of cloud and fire in their midst. They had witnessed water streaming from a desert rock. And yet they are still questioning God?

Verse 21-22: God was angry. What made Him mad? Unbelief. The people who had seen His power refused to trust God. They did not believe in Who He is or in His abilities to deliver them. After all they had seen and experienced, they still did not believe. God’s own people had no faith.

God is the same today. He has not changed. Unbelief still makes Him angry. Often, we do not confront this issue as sin. We laugh and joke around that we are just “worry warts”. We are in sin. We justify ourselves and say that we are “realists”. We are in sin. We go ahead and try to fix the problems ourselves claiming that “God helps those who help themselves. We are in sin. We do not pray because we think that “we can’t waste time”. We are in sin. Unbelief is sin.

The nation of Israel had witnessed the power of God in the plagues. How much more accountable are we for we know the power of God that saves us from eternal destruction? The nation of Israel had the physical Presence of God in their group. How much more



accountable are we for we have God Himself residing within us?

Unbelief is sin. The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary defines unbelief as: lack of belief or faith in God and His provision. While unbelief does not hinder God's faithfulness (Rom. 3:3), it does affect the individual's capacity to receive the benefits of that faithfulness...The skeptic is limited in what he might see or know, while "all things are possible to him who believes" (Mark 9:23).

Unbelief, like all sins, has consequences. This sin limits our capacity in experiencing God's power, provision, and purpose. This sin is claiming that God is not able. We may not come right out and say that, but by our actions we are proving this statement true. Unbelief is serious. It invokes the anger and wrath of God. We must stop coddling this sin. What miracles may we be missing because of our unbelief?

Review the miracles of God's Word. This is the same God at work today. Who knows what He could do in and through a life that truly believes?



DAY 3

Application

All of us have unbelief. It is evident in our community. If we truly were a people of belief, then this town would be turning upside down, like Jerusalem did when the disciples chose to believe the Resurrected Christ. Let's confess our unbelief and let's choose to believe. It's time to walk by faith and not by sight. Forgive us, God!

What thoughts do you have about God being mad at our unbelief?

How can we trust God with our eternal lives and not the day to day issues?

How can we go from unbelief to faith?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Zephaniah 1:14-18, 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21

God is angry at sin. It will be punished. Throughout history sin has been judged. However, a time is coming when the entire earth will experience the wrath of God. This time is referred to as the Day of the Lord. It refers to the tribulation and ultimate destruction of rebellious people.

Zephaniah 1:14-18

14 "The great day of the LORD is near— near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the LORD will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. 15 That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, 16 a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD. Their blood will be poured out like dust and their entrails like filth. 18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the LORD's wrath. In the fire of his jealousy the whole world will be consumed, for he will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth."

Verse 14-18: This is a dark picture. The wrath of God is frightening. It is all-consuming. No one will be able to withstand Him. All ages, all races, all classes, everyone will be judged. The wrath of God will cause weather patterns to change, nature to go askew, physical pain, emotional havoc, confusion, terror, and hopelessness.

Yet look back at Verse 14. God is warning the people of what will take place. He shouts to all of us, "Listen, the Day is coming. Pay attention. Make changes now. You can avoid this suffering. There is a way out. You do not have to incur my wrath." How is this possible? He explains:

Zephaniah 2:1-3

1 Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation, 2 before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's wrath comes upon you. 3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

Verse 1-3: Before the time of wrath comes, we must repent. We must humble ourselves before God and obey His commands. We must seek His righteousness.



Beyond that, we are to share this message with others, just as Zephaniah and Paul share it with us. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth saying:

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

18All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Verse 18-21: How do we seek righteousness? By seeking Christ. Our sins were placed on Him at the cross. There, the sins received the wrath of God. The sins were punished. Justice was served. Because Jesus took our sins, He can give us His righteousness. In order to accept His righteousness, we have to humble ourselves. We are humbled when we realize that we are sinners, that we deserve the wrath of God, that we cannot earn the favor of God, and that we are in need of salvation. We repent of our ways and exchange them for the ways of God, which are His commands. Then, we look toward the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, and receive His righteousness. That is the only way we are spared the Day of the Lord, the wrath of God. His wrath, instead of being poured out on us, was taken out on Jesus, the One who carried our sins on the cross.

If you have sought the righteousness of Jesus, and received it from Him, praise God. You have been spared. You will now receive eternal life instead of the wrath of God that you deserved. However, the gift of righteousness comes with responsibility. Review the passage from 2 Corinthians. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation. That means we are to show others how to seek righteousness so they can be reconciled with the God they offended with their sin. With the gift of righteousness came the gift of ministry. We are called to appeal to others and explain their need for reconciliation. They need to not have their sins counted against them or they will endure the anger, wrath, and judgment of God.

He is appealing to the world to receive His gift and has called us to be the ambassadors to share this “peace treaty” with them. We should be imploring others to be reconciled to God. We should be burdened with the consequences of their sin and rebellion. Our heart should beat in tune with God who is asking people to listen to the way that will allow them to avoid the oncoming wrath. It will be a terrible time.

The Day of the Lord is not without warning. But we are called to be spokespeople, ambassadors, informing others in hopes to save lives for eternity.



DAY 4

Application

Ask God to give you His heart for people. Ask for His help in the ministry of reconciliation.

Write down thoughts about how you think the Day of the Lord will be like.

How can we reconcile the anger of God with His love?

You are not Billy Graham. Yet you, too, have been called to be God's ambassador. How can you specifically live out the ministry of reconciliation?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Exodus 34:4-7a, 2 Peter 3:9b

I know this has been a heavy week as we have studied the anger and hatred of God. As we try to grasp this attribute of God, we may feel overwhelmed. We realize the condemnation that we deserve as well as the punishment this world has to face. Our awareness may feel like a weight pinning us down. But before we feel crushed by the burden, we need to realize this wonderful truth: the anger of God is slow in coming.

Exodus 34:4-7a

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..."

Verse 4: This is the second set of stone tablets for Moses. The first set he broke. Why? Because he was angry. Moses had been on Mt. Sinai for 40 days and nights. During this time, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments and other laws as well. Moses was in the Presence of God.

Another scene was taking place at the base of the mountain. The people thought that Moses had died. They asked Aaron, the brother of Moses, to build them an idol. He carved a golden calf out of the people's gifts of jewelry. The Hebrews claimed that this was the god who had brought them out of Egypt. They worshiped the calf. When Moses approached the camp, he fumed with anger and threw down the tablets, smashing them into pieces.

Thus, Moses needed a new set of tablets. He chiseled them out and then went up on Mount Sinai in order to meet with God. It was the Lord who had called him there.

Verse 5: The Lord came down in a cloud. He stood with Moses. The Name of the Lord was proclaimed. This does not mean God said, "Hi, My Name is the Lord". Names were extremely important in the Jewish culture. The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary explains it this way: ...the people of the Bible were very conscious of the meaning of names. They believed there was a vital connection between the name and the person it identified. A name somehow represented the nature of the person. By proclaiming the Name of the Lord, God was



revealing His character, His person, His very nature to Moses.

Verse 6-7: God then explains to Moses the Name in terms we humans can understand. What is the Name of the Lord? Compassion, graciousness, slowness to anger, love, forgiveness, judgment: all of these encompass the Name of God, who God is, His character. Read those traits again. All of these attributes are not just qualities of God but somehow they represent God Himself. They cannot be separated but instead they all intertwine in God's make-up. This is not just what He does, this is Who He is.

God's anger cannot be viewed apart from His character. His first reaction is not to rain fire down on people. To be slow to anger reveals a diametric point of truth: God is patient. He deals with our rebellion time and time again. We continually shake our fist at a perfect and holy God who could smash us like a bug. Yet, He does not get ruffled and say, "Well, I'll show them." Instead, in keeping with His nature, He continues in compassion, grace, and love. For He desires for all of us to receive His forgiveness in order to escape the judgment that we deserve.

2 Peter 3:9b

9...He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

The anger of God is slow. Because of this you and I had the opportunity to receive the gift of God's grace and mercy. The anger of God is slow. This means we have the opportunity today to tell others about the way of salvation. The anger of God is slow. So, we can live in confidence of the perfect Nature of our God. His Name is the Lord.



DAY 5

Application

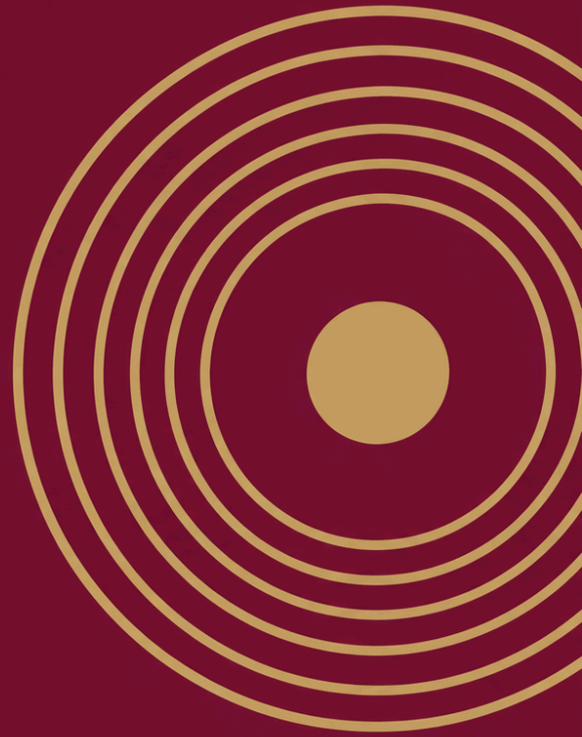
Praise God for the marvelous fact that His anger is slow in coming.

When God revealed His Name to Moses, He shared that He was slow to anger. Why do you think He wanted us to know that?

How can the misconceptions of God's anger be damaging to an unbeliever? What about to a believer?

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Never Gonna Let You Go

This week we will study further in depth “God’s Greatest Hits- Never Gonna Let You Go.” This attribute, God’s goodness, is referred to frequently throughout the Bible. We need to understand the importance of the truth that God is good.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 119:68, Genesis 1:31, Psalm 145:9, Genesis 50:20

Good is often used as a comparison to something else. If we say we had a “good meal” this means in comparison to a “bad meal”. There is a potential for a meal to be either good or bad, depending on the person consuming it. However, one person might consider the meal good while another considers it bad. Thus, the word “good” in our culture is usually defined by the person stating his opinion. We can see this truth in moral choices. One person can act in a certain way and they will believe it is “good”, yet another person could view the action as “bad”. Our viewpoints determine what is good and bad for us. Often, when we study the fact that God is good we view it in terms that He is not bad. This is true in the fact that there is no evil in God. However, there is more to this attribute than being the absence of “bad”. Also, it is beyond just possessing what is “good”. God is good. This is inherent in His nature. He can be nothing but good for He is good. Just like we can be nothing but ourselves for we are ourselves. The following Scripture sums up this truth

Psalm 119:68

68 You are good, and what you do is good;

Verse 68: God is good. That is who He is. It is not a quality He has like some people are more outgoing or more even-tempered than others. It is not a comparison that He is more good than we are. He is the definition of good. If you want to see goodness then you must look at God. We can be “good” or “bad” depending on our day. We are not consistent in being “good” for it is something we do or try to achieve. God, on the other hand, is good because He is. The mere fact that God exists is the reason there is good. Because God is good, everything that flows out of Him is good. His very actions must be good for He is good. There can never be the potential that anything He does is below the perfect standard of good. His essence, His personality, His thoughts, His ways, His plans, His actions, His being, His everything is good. This is why at the time of creation, God could call all He made good.



Genesis 1:31

31 God saw all that He had made and it was very good. Verse 31: What made creation good? It had been formed into existence by Good and only good could come from good. Good is God. God is good. Why is it vital to understand that God is good? So we have a solid foundation in facing life on this earth. For when we look at circumstances we can wander where the good is. Our governments, our environment, our diseases, our weather, our famines, our wars, our losses, our finances do not seem to showcase anything good. So we question how Good can be in control when there is so much bad. The life of Joseph illustrates this point. Joseph was one of twelve sons of Jacob. He was also Jacob's favorite son. The brothers were jealous of their father's affection towards Joseph. So, they sold him into slavery. Joseph suffered many hardships in his new country of Egypt: forced labor, victim of false accusations, prison. Nothing looked good. One day he was summoned before Pharaoh himself. Joseph was able to interpret a dream that the Pharaoh had, informed him that after seven years of abundant harvest, there would be seven years of famine. He advised creating storehouses to prepare for the coming hardship. Pharaoh placed Joseph in charge. During the time of famine, Joseph's brothers came to buy grain. After a series of circumstances, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers. They were frightened, knowing Joseph had the opportunity to get revenge for what they had done to him. Later on Joseph summed up the matter:

Genesis 50:20

20 You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.



DAY 1

Application

God is good. Praise God for this truth.

Can you say with confidence that God is good? Would you be willing to ask God to help you to fully believe this truth?

How can you focus on the fact that God is good despite your circumstances?

How will the realizing that God is good change your life today?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Matthew 5:45, 7:9-11; Romans 8:28

Christmas is a time when children are full of excitement. They are looking forward to all the gifts they will receive. Children who are hard to get out of bed for school will rise up before dawn to wake up parents who had been up all night putting together all the toys. Parents will exert time, energy, and resources in order to see the child's eye sparkle with pure glee as they see the gifts under the tree. This is only a small comparison of all the good that God shows us.

Matthew 7:9-11

9Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? 10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? 11If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Verse 9: Parents are expected to be good to their children. When a child asks for something, they will make an effort to give it to them. In the verse, the child is asking for "bread". Bread was a staple for Jews. It was eaten daily. So, a child asking for bread is asking for a daily, basic, common need. It is the bare necessities. A parent is responsible for provision. They were also not to deceive their children. For the bread of that time period looked similar to the stones of that area: round and flat. (Manners and Customs of the Bible by James M. Freeman). To give a child a stone would be a short-term deception of looking like you met the need but would leave your child empty. Verse 10: Parents are also called to listen and respond to a true need of a child, not just make a sloppy and worthless effort. Fish and snakes are both animals. However, only one can help with the need whereas the other could instill fear. This "answer" to their request could be harmful to the child and be damaging to the parent-child relationship. Verse 11: This illustration of parents responding to children's needs is showing the vast difference between the goodness of people versus God. We, within ourselves, are evil. We are born with a sin nature and are prone to do what is wrong. Yet somehow, we still can do intentionally good things when we choose to do so. Yet even in our "best" moments, we cannot compare to the God who is good. By understanding the benefits of our good actions, we can relate to God who is good to us. If we want what is best for our children, how much more does God want what is best for us as His children? We strive to meet the needs of our children. Yet, God does not need to work to produce what is needed to provide for us. In the words of James MacDonald, the pastor of Harvest Bible chapel, says "God can help us with His feet up". He does not have to be in a panic or exert effort or hope He can answer. God can easily give us what is good. We desire to answer our children. How



much more does God want to answer us? God is good and because of His nature He is good to us. God is not good to us because we are good to Him.

Matthew 5:45

45...He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and send rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Verse 45: God is good out of His nature. It is not dependent on us. He gives life, breath, beating hearts, food, water, shelter and so much more to believers as well as unbelievers. Because God is good, He does good, and everyone receives benefits of His goodness. Just like a parent should not just give provision (food, shelter, clothing) to a child just on the days he was good. However, God is especially good to those who are His children.

Romans 8:28

28...And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.

Verse 28: God is good to all for God is good. However, for those who love Him, there is a greater exertion by God to showcase His goodness in their lives. God is good to everyone but not everyone is willing to receive His nature. Those who are willing, who love Him, who are called by Him, they are in a place to see and experience more of the God who is good. We will explore further into this truth in tomorrow's lesson.



DAY 2

Application

All of Scripture teaches us. Pray to God and ask Him to show you what He desires for you to learn from this tragic story.

Write an example of a time when you know you experienced the goodness of God.

If God can be good to us “with His feet up” why do we not trust His goodness?

What does it mean to you that God is good to the righteous as well as the unrighteous?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 34:8, 119:103, Philippians 1:6

We ended the study yesterday with the realization that those who love God are in a position to see and experience the goodness of God.

Psalm 34:8

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good...

Verse 8: The physical senses allow us to experience the world. They allow us to take in the information of our environment. Here, this verse is stating that we have the ability to test God, to prove Him true to His Word. God has stated He is good. He is willing to prove that fact to you. He does not make wild claims that cannot be verified. Instead, He is willing for the hypothesis of "God is good" to be put to the test. This is open to everyone willing to take God at His Word. In order to put it to the test, you must make an effort. If I told you that an a chocolate pie was good to eat, you cannot prove my statement true until you yourself had a piece of it. You must experience the chocolate yourself in order to make the statement true for yourself. The same is true about God. He can tell us He is good but we cannot live in the truth of this statement until we have experienced it. To taste something involves ingesting it, taking it in within yourself. We need to ingest the truth of God.

Psalm 119:103

103 How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Verse 103: The Word of God is meant to be taken in, ingested. We need to read and learn to understand the truth of God. Then, we will grow in the realization that God is good. However, to know something is not the same as to feel it. We may know God is good but what does that have to do with our lives. We need to see God at work. To see something, you must be in close proximity, nothing can hinder your vision. You need a clear view to take it in. We need to clearly see the goodness of God in our lives. How do we do that? By looking to the good we have already experienced.

Philippians 1:6

6...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Verse 6: There has been good in your life. It is time to look at it. Really look and see all the ways God has been good to you. He has already begun a good work in you and He plans to



continue. Once we realize the good of God then we can trust Him in any circumstances. For we know: God is good, that means He can only be good, which means that any event which comes my way is somehow allowed in the goodness of God so that He can complete His good work in me. I can trust God for He is good. Only believers can experience this. A lost world hopes that maybe God is good but they cannot rest assuredly on this attribute of God. But because we are aware of the fact that God is good, we can clearly experience, taste and see that God is good, in all circumstances. In fact, let us read the original verse in today's study with the segment that follows it.

Psalm 34:8

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.

When do you need to take refuge? During difficult times. Yet, we are talking about God's goodness, how does that relate? When you have experienced the goodness of God, you can trust Him even during times of difficulty. God is good, all the time. We have experienced this truth and can trust His goodness to be with us no matter what we must face in this life.



DAY 3

Application

Thank the Lord for the good work He has begun in you. Ask Him to open your eyes to see more of the truth that He is good

List examples of how you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

How can knowing God is good help us during difficult times?

What are practical ways we can “taste and see that the Lord is good”?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Genesis 3:1-7, John 8:44, Hebrews 5:12-14

God is good. Since He is good, He alone can define what good is. Often, we try to come up with our definitions of good. This is as diverse as the people themselves. For what one considers good, another may have another opinion. This can lead to problems that are as old as the Garden of Eden

Genesis 3:1-7

1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' " 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Verse 1: The serpent, a.k.a. Satan, is crafty. He is a manipulative liar. He tries to get you from looking at all the good things in your life (all the trees in the garden) and focus on the one boundary God has placed on you.

Verse 2: The Lord had given them all of the Garden of Eden. Paradise surrounded them. God is good to us; He blesses us so much. The enemy would have you focus on the one thing God said "No" to instead of all the wonderful things He has said "yes" to. There is a misconception about God that makes Him sound like He enjoys saying "No" and wants us to be miserable. Yet, the truth is that God's plan for Adam and Eve was paradise, filled with the "yeses" of everything they could want.

Verse 4-5: The enemy defined a new definition of what God had said. God, who is good, gave Adam and Eve a boundary for their protection. The serpent made it sound like God was withholding good from them. This new definition to what God had said led to disaster.

Verse 6-7: Eve looked at the boundary with a new definition for what is "good" and ate the fruit and gave it also to Adam. Of course, the consequences of this action are still being felt



today.

What could have been done differently? How can we learn from their mistakes to prevent us from wreaking havoc on our own lives? We learned the answer yesterday.

Psalm 34:8

8 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him.

Verse 8: Taste and see: these are the same actions Eve did. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food (taste) and pleasing to the eye (see)...she took some and ate it. Each day we have a choice, we can decide to experience (taste and see) the Lord who is good or we can experience our own definitions of what is good, which the enemy will gladly put on our paths. The enemy is a deceiver. He will do anything to make you believe that his way is good and not God's.

John 8:44

44...the devil...when he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

Verse 44: The devil is a liar. He promises "good" but his path leads to destruction. Eve was the first to experience this terrible truth. Everything he said led her away from paradise. He desires to do the same in our day. He will lie and tell you something is good for you for he knows that it will lead to your demise. He wants to destroy you. If you are a believer in Christ, the enemy cannot take away your salvation, but he would love to ruin your life on earth. He enjoys it when you fall into sin. How can we be protected? We must know the true definition of what is good and follow it. Only God can define what is good: not the culture, not the media, not friends, not schools, not even a church. The only way good can be defined is by the Word of God. If any group decides to define "good" using any other standard, they have set themselves up for failure for it is truly something evil.

Hebrews 5:12-14

12In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! 13Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. 14But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Verse 12-14: We need to continually grow in God's Word by constantly using it in our lives. This leads us to growing in understanding between good and evil. The Bible is the only standard for what is good. We must go to it for making decisions so that we can choose to be on the good path that God desires for us. Then, we will be able to easily discern the lies of the enemy.



DAY 4

Application

Ask God to show you if there is any area in your life where you have conceived your own definition of what is good for you. Confess this sin and ask Him to lead you into the truth of what is good.

What other groups in your “world” try to define what is good for your life?

Do you believe the enemy tries to convince people of other definitions of what is “good”? If so, what example can you give.

How do we train ourselves in the Word in order to distinguish between good and evil?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Isaiah 61:1, Mark 1:15, 16:15

God, who is good, has something He wants to say to us. What He wants to say is good. Everything He says is good. He is good so His word is good. Christ had a special mission to help us to understand this truth.

Isaiah 61:1

1 The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

Verse 1: This was a prophecy about Christ. The Lord was going to send Him to earth to preach a message of good news. That is exactly what He did.

Mark 1:15

15 "The time has come," He said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news."

Jesus came to earth to tell the good news to people. He felt the message was so important that He left the beauty of heaven to come to this dusty earth. He allowed His glory to be wrapped up in skin. He confined Himself to the laws of gravity, time, and space. He did all of this to share the good news. That is how important it was to Him. Not only that, He commands us to teach it as well.

Mark 16:15

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."

What is this good news? What does the God who is good want to tell us? Why did He send His Son to teach this message? Why is it vital for us to go and tell others? It must be good, what is it? It is summed up in one sentence.

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Verse 16: Are you disappointed? Did you skim the verse because it seemed too familiar? Can I rebuke all of us? This is the good news. We should be more excited about this than ESPN or whatever else that makes us cheer. Yet, often we get bored with what God Himself



called the “good news”. The entire Word of God was to help us understand this amazing “good news”. What is this “good news”? First of all, God loves us. Really think about that: you are loved by God. This is the ultimate expression of His goodness, to love such unworthy creatures as us. He then expressed His goodness by giving us an amazing gift, His Son. He gave us a gift that we abused, mistreated, and crucified. He knew all of that yet He still gave His Son. For in His divine purpose He knew that the relationship He wanted with us was only possible by His perfect Son dying on a cross. All we have to do is believe in Him and we will have eternal life. That is good news, planned by Good Himself, orchestrated by Good Himself, proclaimed by Good Himself, and carried out by Good Himself. For us to grasp the idea of “God is good”, we need to look no further than the cross.



DAY 5

Application

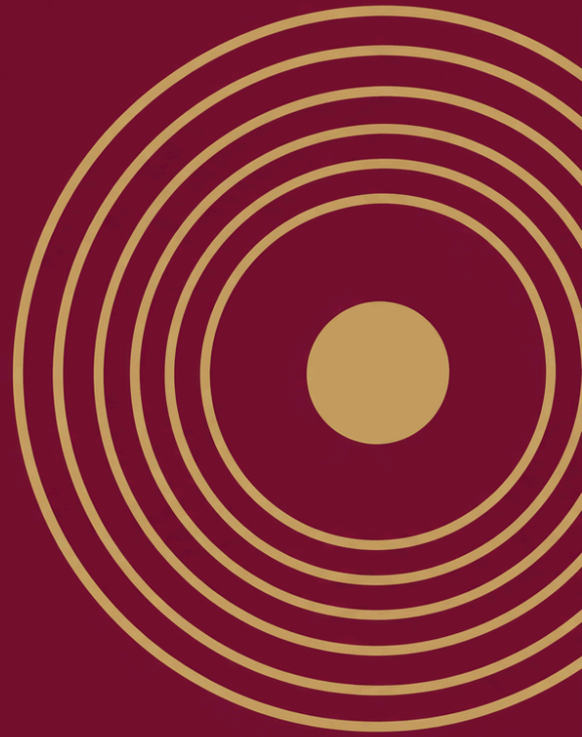
God is good. He has shown us His goodness over and over again. If we truly believe it, then we will tell others the “good news” proclaimed to us by a Good God. Ask the Lord to show you someone to whom you can tell this good news!

How can we reclaim the excitement about the good news?

How can we share with others the good news?

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Power of Love

The theme of love is everywhere. Movies are made about it. Songs are sung about it. Poems are written on it. Love is important to humans. We were made for love. This week we will study the One who created us with this need for only He can fully meet it. God is love.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: Psalm 31:7-18, 21-22

One of the more popular preschool songs is “Jesus loves me”. You know it “Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so...” It is almost cliché to discuss the love of God. The song is simple. Yes, the Bible often addresses the love of God for the people He created. But sometimes when I am in the middle of terrible circumstances, I cry out, “God, I thought you said You loved me. Look at what I am going through. How can you love me and yet allow me to suffer this?” Have you ever felt that way? Read about someone else who describes their suffering.

Psalm 31:9-13

9 Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. 10 My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak. 11 Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my friends— those who see me on the street flee from me. 12 I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. 13 For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life.

Verse 9-13: This person is in anguish. He is being affected both physically and emotionally from the stress in his life. He feels completely alone, having been abandoned even by his friends. Not only that, his enemies and his neighbors hate him.

The slander against him abounds. He is despised, alone, forgotten. He is shattered, like broken pottery that can never be fixed. Hopelessness and fear are taking over. He is at the end of his rope.

What would you do if you felt that way? Would you shut the blinds, cry in the dark, punch a wall, whine, complain, get angry, or eat lots of chocolate ice cream? I am amazed at what this man did.

Psalm 31:14-18

14 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." 15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. 16 Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love. 17 Let me not be put to shame, O LORD, for I have cried out to you; but let the wicked be put to shame and lie silent in the grave. 18 Let their lying lips be silenced, for with pride and contempt they speak arrogantly against the righteous.



Verse 14-18: Instead of staying focused on his horrible circumstances, he turned his eyes to God. He chose to trust God over all the thoughts screaming in his head, over all the emotions churning in his heart, over all the advice of the world. He recognized God is God. He knew that no matter what would happen, his life was in the Lord's hands. God alone could save him. In his dark times, he requested that the light of God shine in on his situation. He knew that God's love was unfailing and was powerful enough for saving. He asked that the God of love turn his circumstances around.

What did love do? Love saw the pain.

Psalm 31:7-8

7 I will be glad and rejoice in your love, for you saw my affliction and knew the anguish of my soul. 8 You have not handed me over to the enemy but have set my feet in a spacious place.

Verse 7-8: Even during difficulties, God's love is there. Even when we feel abandoned, the God who loves us sees our circumstances. Even when we see no way out, the God of love delivers us.

Psalm 31:21-22

21 Praise be to the LORD, for he showed his wonderful love to me when I was in a besieged city. 22 In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!" Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.

Verse 21-22: Love is shown even when we feel like we are in the middle of a war. When we are attacked on all sides physically, emotionally, or spiritually, we are not alone. The God who loves us hears our cries. He is not far removed from our problems. He is not calloused to our hurts. He loves us. He is involved. How wonderful His love feels when we are in a place of hurting and pain. The sweetness of His love, which is always present, takes on a deeper meaning as we face our circumstances with Him. Even when we feel far away from Him, He is never far from us.

Jesus loves you. The Bible tells you so. But do you believe it? Will you trust His love even when you walk into difficult places? Will you allow the reality of His love to cut through to even your deepest pain? Will you cry out to Him like a child who has fallen, knowing with confidence that the Father will pick you up? Your pain is real. But so is His love. Let Him show you the reality of His love.



DAY 1

Application

The truth of the love of God can meet us at our deepest need. Ask God to apply His love to the hurting parts of your heart.

Have you ever questioned the love of God? If so, when?

How can you trust the love of God even when you walk through difficult circumstances?

How can you live out the reality of God's love when you are suffering?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Hosea 1:2, 3:1-3, 13:14

I am a prostitute. I have given myself over to what was not right. I have done the unspeakable. I have sold my body and soul for money. Now that I have your attention, I must add to the shock: you, also, are a prostitute.

"I am not!" you proclaim. But it is true. You have forsaken all that is good and pure to pursue your worldly ways. You preferred the arms of the world over the embrace of God. You left the One who loved you in order to run after those who used you. The ways of the world, the lusts of the flesh, the desires of our hearts, left us all empty. Yet, for some reason we continue to follow after all that leads us to sin. Sometimes, when we are in the middle of all that is heinous, we hear Someone calling out for us. It is a voice of love, of mercy, of grace. Will we come back to our God or continue down our path of destruction? This is the same question a woman named Gomer had to face. Gomer was a prostitute in the physical sense. She was married to a prophet of God. Seems like an unlikely match, yet God chose the marriage.

Hosea 1:2

2 When the LORD began to speak through Hosea, the LORD said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the LORD."

Hosea was commanded by the Lord to marry Gomer. Their marriage was to be a picture of what the nation of Israel was doing to God. The Lord had been faithful to Israel and had loved her unconditionally. Yet, Israel continued to worship other gods, especially one named Baal which involved cultic practices, including prostitution and child sacrifice

The symbolic picture of Hosea and Gomer vividly portrayed the waywardness of Israel. Despite all that God had done for the nation, she continued to run away from Him. In the same way, Gomer left her husband and went back to her life of prostitution. Through this process, she somehow ended up becoming enslaved.

Hosea 3:1-3

1 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes." 2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek barley. 3 Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."



Verse 1-3: Gomer had run away from Hosea. She left the one who truly loved her and went to another man. This man did not protect her from enslavement. Now she was in bondage with no means of escape on her own. Is this not the picture of us? We run away from God and pursue our own wants and desires. Yet, the sin that seemed so alluring now has us trapped. We cannot escape on our own. We are powerless, like a slave in chains.

You are sitting in a dungeon. Your clothes are tattered. You are forced into unspeakable acts for you are no longer treated as human. You lean your head against the stone wall questioning how you got here. You remember thinking it would be fun. You wanted freedom. You wanted life your way. Now, look at you. Chained, battered, scarred. You are alone. Who would want used trash like you? You hear voices. Someone is offering to pay for your release. You strain to listen. The price quoted by the jailor is high, but the voice is not deterred. He is willing to pay any price. You recognize the Voice. It is the One you left. You ignored His pleas for you not to go. You smirked at Him, thinking you did not need Him. You made fun of His restrictive ways. You mocked His love. Now, He is here. You look at yourself. Shame flushes your face. You tell yourself, "I don't want Him to see me here." You push against the wall as if to hide. Then, you hear the footsteps. You close your eyes. But the Voice calls your name. You are looking down. In front of your face is a hand reaching out to you. The hand is scarred. You look up and scars on His head overwhelm you. You look away only to see His feet with healed puncture wounds. You look up. The eyes are filled with love. And He says, "You were worth the price".

We were in the dungeon of eternal death. We deserved to be there. But a loving Savior paid the ultimate price in order to redeem us. It cost Him His life to save us from the penalty of our iniquity.

Hosea 13:14

14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, are your plagues? Where, O grave, is your destruction? "I will have no compassion,

Verse 14: We were ransomed. The payment was blood. We can walk into a new life under the banner of our Husband's love. Our past is now the past. What we have done cannot be changed. However, what Christ has done gives us an eternal future. That is the power of love.



DAY 2

Application

Spend time in adoration of the Lover of your eternal soul.

How would you respond to the call to marry a prostitute?

Why would God give us this picture of a husband and wife relationship?

How can you see the attributes of Gomer in you?

How can we grow in understanding and awe of the cost of Christ's redemption of our lives?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Romans 5:6-8

Let's study one of the most popular sentences said around the world. "I love you." The personal pronoun "I" is followed by a verb. This verb is the word "love". This verb cannot be enacted upon itself, it must have an object and in this sentence it is "you". Before you begin yawning on our remedial English lesson, realize the power of this statement. Love is a verb. That means love is an action. Love is not just a sweet feeling that we have. It is beyond being "star struck" by someone. Love is a choice. Love is intentional. It is narrowing in on an object and devoting thoughts, emotions, and actions to that object. If I said, "I love ice cream" then I would think about it, be very happy considering the flavors of it, and would make the decision to buy it. When we say we love a person, this is reflected in our thoughts, emotions, and actions.

Why am I going on about this point? Because it is the key to everything! God loves you. This is not mere words. The Lord of the heavens and earth has thoughts about you, has feelings for you, and even acts in love towards you.

Romans 5:6-8

6You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.
7Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. 8But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Verse 6-8: We are the focus, the object, the treasure that God loves. You are the apple of His eye. You make Him smile.

To think that God, the Lord, the King loves us, we might consider ourselves amazing. Yet, when we look at this text, we are faced with the reality of ourselves. We are powerless. So, we are not loved for our strength. We are ungodly. Since this is true, we are not loved for our character. We are not righteous. That means we are not loved for our choices in life. We are not good. The stark reality is that we are not loved for our personalities. We are sinners. So, we are not loved for our "religion".

We did nothing to earn God's love. It was not possible. Look at what we are. Do you see anything within us to move God to love us, even on a good day? Yet, God chose to love us. He had to for He is love. It is not that He just loves to love. He is the embodiment of love. That is all the more amazing to think about when you realize the objects of His eternal



affection are us.

It becomes even more mind-boggling to consider when we were shown the love of God. Was it when we had just named all the books of the Bible? How about when we helped an old lady cross the street? Maybe it was during a church service? Or when we gave money to the poor? It was none of these. God demonstrated His love for us when we were still sinners. We had our fists shaking in God's face, and He still loved us. We were mocking His ways, and He still loved us. We were living life our way and He still loved us.

His love was beyond just a warm fuzzy feeling. His love was put into action in a drastic way. The King of the universe set aside His crown of gold for a crown of thorns. He set down a royal scepter to pick up a filthy cross. The God who created life allowed Himself to die for you. As He hung there, nails in His hands and feet, people shook their fist at him. They mocked Him. They wanted life their way. That same crowd is the same people He was willing to die for. That same crowd includes you and me. While we were still sinners, He died. This act proves the love of God for you.

Do you question this truth? Do you wonder if God truly loves you? Do you sometimes feel that He loves the "spiritual giants" more than you? Jesus died one death. This one act on the cross demonstrates God's love to each one of us. That means His love is equal for all of us. The crucifixion is the proof for this truth. We are loved by God. This love is not determined by how we were in the past, how we are today, or how we will be in the future. His love was already shown to us thousands of years before we were born. This act of love can never be revoked. It is eternally given to us. The cross is all the evidence we need.



DAY 3

Application

You are loved by God. Praise Him for choosing you to be the object of His divine affection.

Why do we question the love of God?

How does recognizing ourselves as sinners help us to better understand God's love for us?

How can we help someone who does not believe God could ever love someone like him or her?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Luke 22:33-34, 54-62, John 21:15-19

Have you ever dared to dream of doing great things for Christ, only to miserably fail? I know I have. I have vowed to stay away from sin then fell back into it once again. I have dreamed of handling every circumstance with faith and boldness, only to cower in fear. I have treated God's children cruelly even though I knew He had called me to love them. I have disappointed myself as well as hurt others. Can the love of God meet me at my deepest failure? May we be inspired and humbled by someone who lived through failure to see the victory that only the love of God could accomplish.

Luke 22:33-34

33But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." 34Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Verse 33-34: Peter was extremely confident of himself. When others were scared, Peter ran forward. The disciples stayed in the boat. Peter walked on water. The disciples weren't sure who Jesus truly was. Peter announced Him as the Christ, the Messiah. He was bold. But he was also foolish. He had placed his trust in himself, his abilities, his fearlessness. They all tumbled like a deck of cards.

Luke 22:54-55

54Then seizing him, they led him away and took him into the house of the high priest. Peter followed at a distance. 55But when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter sat down with them.

Verse 54-55: Jesus has just been arrested. A crowd of men were sent to bring Jesus back to His accusers. They had been armed and ready for a fight. The disciples fled the scene. Jesus was led away.

In the darkness, Peter cautiously made his way to the place where the mock trial of Jesus was being held. Look where he sat down, right with the people who were enemies of Jesus. Maybe some of them were from the very crowd that had arrested Him in the garden. Obviously, these were not the followers of Jesus hanging out. Yet, Peter sat right down with them, trying to blend in. He was pretending to be one of them. His bluff was getting ready to be called.



Luke 22:56-60

56A servant girl saw him seated there in the firelight. She looked closely at him and said, "This man was with him." 57But he denied it. "Woman, I don't know him," he said. 58A little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." "Man, I am not!" Peter replied. 59About an hour later another asserted, "Certainly this fellow was with him, for he is a Galilean." 60Peter replied, "Man, I don't know what you're talking about!" Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed.

Verse 56-58: Peter is trying to act like one of the crowd. Suddenly, he feels someone staring at him. This servant girl was watching him intently. She announces the truth. Peter was with Jesus. She recognized him, possibly from the arrest in the garden. Peter denied it. Another person accused him of his alliance with Jesus. Once again, Peter said, "no". After an hour's time, after a long time of being able to think through his lies, he fell into the trap again. Strike three. The rooster announces his failures. The moment of defeat was not experienced alone.

Luke 22:61-62

61The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." 62And he went outside and wept bitterly.

Verse 61-62: Your Best Friend is facing false charges. His torturous death is imminent. He is alone in a cruel mob. You promised to be there for Him. Instead, you just denied even knowing Him, not once but three times. The rooster crows. Suddenly, life is turned upside down. The One he had denied did not deny him. The One he had forsook had never forsaken him. In the middle of His darkest hour, Jesus remembered Peter as he faced the darkness of his own sin, guilt, and shame.

Peter left the crowd that he was trying to hide in, for he had been found. Not by an angry mob but by One Man who was willing to turn and see him in his shame and love him still. That love was made evident specifically Peter after the death and resurrection of Christ.



John 21:15-19

15When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." 16Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." 17The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." 18Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." 19Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Verse 15-19: Three times Jesus asked Peter about his love for Him. Each time Peter would have to probe his heart to answer. The failure of denial, the sound of the rooster crowing would have still been fresh on his mind. Jesus knew that. That is why He reinstated Peter, giving this man a ministry for the kingdom of God. Feed the lambs, take care of the sheep, feed the sheep. Be about heavenly business. Do my work. Peter, I know you failed. But you are going to be faithful to the end. Peter would die a martyr for the sake of Christ.

Jesus was encouraging him to let go of this past failure and walk confidently in a new way. The bold and arrogant Peter was now being called to minister, to help, to give his life to others. Jesus knew his sin, he had seen him in the middle of it, yet he also could see what Peter would be for the kingdom. The faithless becomes faithful, the coward becomes bold, the one hiding in a crowd becomes a teacher, the one who denied Christ would now publicly proclaim Him.

Then, Jesus took Him back with the words "Follow Me". These were the same words that Peter had heard when Jesus called him to leave the fishing business three years before. It was if He was saying, "Peter, My call on your life was never revoked. I still have a plan and purpose for you. Your sin cannot deny my faithfulness. You will be what I have called you to be."

The same is true for us. We are loved by a God who saw us in the middle of our failures. This was after we knew Him and yet we still crumbled into wicked ways. His thoughts and feelings for you have not changed. He will not revoke His call in your life. You are still one of His own. He cherishes you. Do not hide in the crowd anymore. Go out and weep in repentance. But then, allow Jesus to restore you to the heavenly ministry that He has called you to. His plan for you is amazing. Look at Him. He is looking at you. His eyes are filled with love.



DAY 4

Application

If you are overcome by the failures of your past, confess it now. And then walk towards the freedom that the cross gives you. Let God reinstate you to His purposes in your life. He will. He loves you.

Do you believe the love of God even when you have failed miserably? If so, what is the evidence of this belief?

How do we allow God to reinstate us into His kingdom purposes?

How can the truth of this lesson help us to minister to other believers who have been sidelined by their past sins committed after they received salvation?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 1:4-6, 3:17b-19

Have you ever felt left out? Maybe you were in a new place and did not know anyone. Or you were at a party and no one talked to you. The worst of all could be that you experienced the torture of recess, waiting for one of the captains to pick you to be on his team. Let me tell you an amazing truth: God's love for you led Him to pick you as one of His own. You are on His eternal team.

Ephesians 1:4-6

4For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Verse 4-6: Imagine space, the final frontier. Picture it before the earth was formed, before the galaxy was in place, before the stars were hung, before it was what it is. God already loved you. It would be thousands of years before you would be born. Yet, He loved you. And He picked you out like a special treasure to be His child.

God chose you to be His child. He adopted you. He loves you as much as He loves His own Son, Jesus. You do not receive leftover love, but you are given the same parental affection that Christ Jesus receives! What an awesome thought!

God loved you before you could love Him. God loved you before you could do any "good works" for Him. God loved you before you could speak His Name. God loved before your great-grandparents were even born!

How great is this love! Does it boggle your mind? It should. For it is beyond our understanding. Yet, it needs to be explored for His love is everything in our lives.

Ephesians 3:17-19

17so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.



Verse 17-19: We are to find our roots, our stability, our strength in the love of the Lord. To know that we are loved in such an amazing way can keep us standing firm no matter what winds of circumstances may blow.

To know that you are loved is wonderful. That is the beginning. However, there is so much more. God wants you to explore His love, to experience it. He wants you to grow in the awareness of His love for you. Is this not true in any relationship? Over time, do you not come to appreciate the person more and more? It is the same with the Lord. He wants us to grow in our capacity to know His love, this only happens by spending time with Him.

As you grasp more of the love of God for you, the more you will realize that there is even more love that what you can understand. It is a divine mystery. He is the ultimate intrigue of the universe. He never grows dull. Instead, our excitement in God increases over time.

God's love is beyond any width, length, height, or depth. It can never be measured but it can be explored. Are you up for the challenge? It will be the biggest thrill of your life.



DAY 5

Application

Meditate on the love of God. Thank the Lord for His amazing love for you.

What are your thoughts and feelings about being chosen as a child of God?

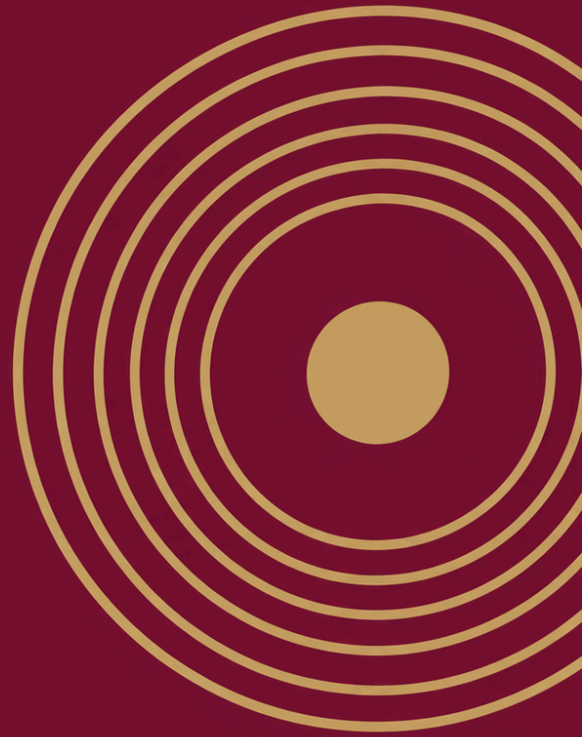
How do we explore the love of God?

What have you learned this week that has impacted you?

BIBLE STUDY

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Right Here Waiting

Long-suffering is defined as Patiently enduring wrongs or difficulties. God is long-suffering toward us. This week I hope we will all come to praise the Lord for His long-suffering toward us, the ones who wronged Him.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5

**DAY 1**

The Word

Today's Scripture: Nehemiah 9:5-31

Today is going to involve a lot of Scripture reading. The passage gives an overview of Israel's physical, emotional, and spiritual history. As you read, note all the marvelous things God did for His people. Also, let the people's reaction speak to you.



Nehemiah 9:5-31

5 "Stand up and praise the LORD your God, who is from everlasting to everlasting. " "Blessed be your glorious name, and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise. 6 You alone are the LORD. You made the heavens, even the highest heavens, and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to everything, and the multitudes of heaven worship you. 7 "You are the LORD God, who chose Abram and brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans and named him Abraham. 8 You found his heart faithful to you, and you made a covenant with him to give to his descendants the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites and Gergashites. You have kept your promise because you are righteous. 9 "You saw the suffering of our forefathers in Egypt; you heard their cry at the Red Sea. 10 You sent miraculous signs and wonders against Pharaoh, against all his officials and all the people of his land, for you knew how arrogantly the Egyptians treated them. You made a name for yourself, which remains to this day. 11 You divided the sea before them, so that they passed through it on dry ground, but you hurled their pursuers into the depths, like a stone into mighty waters. 12 By day you led them with a pillar of cloud, and by night with a pillar of fire to give them light on the way they were to take. 13 "You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. 14 You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses. 15 In their hunger you gave them bread from heaven and in their thirst you brought them water from the rock; you told them to go in and take possession of the land you had sworn with uplifted hand to give them. 16 "But they, our forefathers, became arrogant and stiff-necked, and did not obey your commands. 17 They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them, 18 even when they cast for themselves an image of a calf and said, 'This is your god, who brought you up out of Egypt,' or when they committed awful blasphemies. 19 "Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the desert. By day the pillar of cloud did not cease to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take. 20 You gave your good Spirit to instruct them. You did not withhold your manna from their mouths, and you gave them water for their thirst. 21 For forty years you sustained them in the desert; they lacked nothing, their clothes did not wear out nor did their feet become swollen. 22 "You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. They took over the country of Sihon king of Heshbon and the country of Og king of Bashan. 23 You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess. 24 Their sons went in and took possession of the land. You subdued before them the Canaanites, who lived in the land; you handed the Canaanites over to them, along with their kings and the peoples of the land, to deal with



them as they pleased. 25 They captured fortified cities and fertile land; they took possession of houses filled with all kinds of good things, wells already dug, vineyards, olive groves and fruit trees in abundance. They ate to the full and were well-nourished; they reveled in your great goodness. 26 "But they were disobedient and rebelled against you; they put your law behind their backs. They killed your prophets, who had admonished them in order to turn them back to you; they committed awful blasphemies. 27 So you handed them over to their enemies, who oppressed them. But when they were oppressed they cried out to you. From heaven you heard them, and in your great compassion you gave them deliverers, who rescued them from the hand of their enemies. 28 "But as soon as they were at rest, they again did what was evil in your sight. Then you abandoned them to the hand of their enemies so that they ruled over them. And when they cried out to you again, you heard from heaven, and in your compassion you delivered them time after time. 29 "You warned them to return to your law, but they became arrogant and disobeyed your commands. They sinned against your ordinances, by which a man will live if he obeys them. Stubbornly they turned their backs on you, became stiff-necked and refused to listen. 30 For many years you were patient with them. By your Spirit you admonished them through your prophets. Yet they paid no attention, so you handed them over to the neighboring peoples. 31 But in your great mercy you did not put an end to them or abandon them, for you are a gracious and merciful God.

Verse 5-31: Let's review all that God had done for His people: created them, chose Abraham to be the father of their nation, released them from slavery, parted the Red Sea, led them in the desert with a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire, spoke to them from heaven, gave them just laws, created the Sabbath, fed them, gave them water from the rock, allowed them military victory, sustained them, kept their clothes from wearing out and their feet from swelling in the desert, gave them a country of their own, made them as numerous as the stars.

Imagine all of these gifts! How did the people respond? They were arrogant and stiff-necked, and disobedient. Besides that, they also ignored God, forgot His blessings, were rebellious, and committed idolatry. They even killed the very prophets that God had sent to warn them. They were blasphemous and evil.

So, what would you do with these people? Forget them? Abandon them? Let them suffer as you laugh? Thankfully, God is in charge while we are not. This was the response of God:

Nehemiah 9:17

But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them...

To sum it up, God is a God of long suffering. He is patient with us even when we do wrong to Him. Did that mean that the people were walking all over God? By all means, no. God did punish them by allowing other nations to have military victories against them. But this only



happened after warning upon warning. Then, when the people learned their lesson, they cried out to Him and God helped them out of their distress. By the way, He helped them knowing they would be rebellious against Him again. God is long-suffering.



DAY 1

Application

The long-suffering of God has been shown to you as well. Thank Him for that.

How are you like the Israelites?

How does your sin look when you view it through the lens of the long-suffering of God?

How have you received the benefits of God's attribute of long-suffering?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: 1 Timothy 1:13-17

We do not deserve the long-suffering, or the patience, of God. Yet, He gives it anyway. The long-suffering attribute of God benefits us yet that is not its ultimate purpose. The main reason for the patience shown by God to us is for the God to be glorified in us.

1 Timothy 1:15-17

15Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. 16But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. 17Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Verse 15: The Apostle Paul wrote these words. He knew why Christ came to earth. His main objective was to save us. The cross was the goal of His life. He knew we needed intervention and we could not help ourselves. Paul profoundly realized the truth of this statement. He knew what he was. He knew what he had done. He knew what he deserved. In fact, earlier in the letter he described his life before Christ:

1 Timothy 1:13-14

13Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Paul blasphemed the Name of Christ. Paul persecuted Christians, to the point of death. Paul was violent in nature. Despite his actions toward Jesus and His followers, God did not strike Paul down. Instead, the long-suffering of God came into play until a moment in time when the grace of God would be poured out onto Paul.

Verse 16: The display of God's patience in Paul's life was an encouragement to new believers. They felt that if Paul who had been so opposed to Christ could receive eternal mercy, then they could be confident that their salvation was secure. In other words, "If God could have long-suffering towards someone like Paul, then I believe He can show that patience to me if He is willing."



Not only was it an example to new believers about the patience of God leading to salvation but also the patience of God in sanctification. The word “sanctification” is defined as the process of God’s grace by which the believer is separated from sin and becomes dedicated to God’s righteousness. Accomplished by the Word of God (John 17:7) and the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:3-4), sanctification results in holiness, or purification from the guilt and power of sin. In other words, living more and more in God’s ways and less and less like the world’s ways. Paul wrote in verse 15 “I am the worst”, referring to sinners. The word “am” is present tense. He is not saying that before conversion he was terrible but now he is perfect. Paul still recognized that he sinned and that he still was in need of God’s patience. He wanted this, also, to be an example to new believers. God’s long-suffering is evident before, during, and after our belief of Christ as our Savior. His patience continues in our lives.

What does this truth mean to us? For one, we can stop living in fear. I have a friend who whenever she does something that she thinks is really bad says, “I’m going to burn”. Also, whenever something bad happens to her she thinks it must be related to past sins committed years ago. She lives with a weight that keeps her from this truth: God is long-suffering. He is patient with us even when we do wrong. He knew we would sin against Him. That is why Christ came with the mission to save sinners. We did not surprise Him by failing. He knew we would. He loves us still. Second, we need to live to display the glory of God. Refer back to verse 17.

Verse 17: Christ came to save sinners. When the long-suffering of God is shown in our lives because we receive eternal life instead of eternal destruction, God receives the glory. When the long-suffering of God is shown in our lives, because we sin, but He still shows us mercy, God receives the glory. When the long-suffering of God is shown in our lives and others recognize it and also believe to receive eternal life, God receives the glory. We need to be aware of the work of God’s long-suffering in our lives so that we may give Him the glory!



DAY 2

Application

God's long-suffering has been shown, is shown, and will be shown in your life. Thank God for this amazing truth.

How is the long-suffering attribute of God related to salvation?

How is the patience of God demonstrated in your personal life?

How can you give God glory for the display of His long-suffering in your life?



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Jonah 1:1-3; 3:1-5, 10; 4:1-11

One day I was riding in a car with a friend. We passed by an adult book store. She said, "hold on" and then whispered a prayer. I asked her what she was doing. She told me that she was praying for that place to burn down. I remember thinking, "Why not prayer for the salvation of the people who own it. Then, they would close the business. For it to just burn, they would receive insurance and possibly build another one. No one's life would be eternally changed." Thankfully, I kept my thoughts to myself for I may have started out sarcastically by calling her, "Jonah". The prophet Jonah, also, did not have an understanding of the long-suffering attribute of God.

Jonah 1:1-3

1 The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." 3 But Jonah ran away from the LORD and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the LORD.

Verse 1-3: Jonah was a Hebrew prophet that had been asked by God to go to Nineveh. He was to confront their wicked ways. The city of Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian Empire. They were cruel people, known for violence and torture. They were a threat to the nation of Israel. They were a pagan culture which reveled in their evil ways. Jonah did not want to go, he went in the opposite direction.

Through a series of events God brought Jonah back to Nineveh. Jonah began to preach the message of the Lord.

Jonah 3:1-5

1 Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: 2 "Go to the great city of Nineveh and proclaim to it the message I give you." 3 Jonah obeyed the word of the LORD and went to Nineveh. Now Nineveh was a very important city—a visit required three days. 4 On the first day, Jonah started into the city. He proclaimed: "Forty more days and Nineveh will be overturned." 5 The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth.

Verse 1-5: The truth of God was proclaimed and the people repented. They believed God and turned from their wicked ways. How did God respond?



Jonah 3:10

10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

God gave them compassion. During their times of wickedness, He had shown His long-suffering by not destroying them. He had sent them warning about impending judgment and the people changed their ways. If that is how God responded, what did Jonah do?

Jonah 4:1

1 But Jonah was greatly displeased and became angry.

Verse 1: Jonah did not celebrate this amazing spiritual victory. He did not rejoice that lives had been eternally changed. He was not excited that the “adult book store had not burned” but that instead they just closed shop. He was mad. Who was he mad at? He was angry with God.

Jonah 4:2-3

2 He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. 3 Now, O LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

Verse 2-3: Sometimes, the compassion, grace, long-suffering, and love of the Lord toward others makes us angry. We want to see others punished for their wrong especially if they have victimized us. We want them to “burn” instead of being saved. We hope for the worst to happen to them. We rejoice over their misfortunes. It is not always the most terrible of things, but we relish when they are embarrassed, or they have financial troubles, or their children make poor choices. We smile when others talk bad about them and do not mind joining in the conversation. We are so much like Jonah. We get upset when things go right for our enemies. God asks us the same question, He asked the prophet.

Jonah 4:4

4 But the LORD replied, "Have you any right to be angry?"

Verse 4: We are also the beneficiaries of the long-suffering of God. How can we be angry when others receive His patience? We are called to present the truth of God to this world. Are we to be upset when they receive it? Are we that far removed from the heart of God? We see the evil in others. We look at them from a distance. My friend saw the wicked bookstore, but she did not know the name of the owner, when he was born, his heartaches, his failures, his secrets. She just saw his gross sin. Can you imagine if God only saw the sin hanging on us? What if He had not looked past our gross sin? We would not have salvation. But God shows



His long-suffering to us for He chooses to be acquainted with us.

Jonah 4:11

11 But Nineveh has more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, and many cattle as well. Should I not be concerned about that great city?"

Verse 11: God knew the people. He was not far removed. He loved them for He knew them. Next time we want to see someone “burn”, pray to God that He will help us see that person through His eyes. Maybe then we can love them enough to reach out to them so that we can rejoice when they receive salvation.



DAY 3

Application

Confess any “Jonah” tendencies in your life. Ask God to give you His heart for people.

Why do we want others to be judged?

How do we “run away” from God in His request that we proclaim to others their need for repentance?

What causes us to question the Lord’s long-suffering with others?

What person or group of people do you desire to see punished instead of receiving mercy? This group may not be known to you personally. How will you begin to work on changing your attitude towards them? (Please remember, their sin is still wrong. But we do not have the right to question God’s long-suffering in their lives.)



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Segments from the book of Matthew

There are a group of men in the Bible who constantly amaze me. I like to refer to them as the "Dumb Disciples". I know that is not usually the title they receive. We often refer to them as saints and apostles, which they were. Yet, in so doing, we often forget that these were real men. We have put them on display as those who have done great things for God, which they did. But we need to zero in on their defeats as well. These guys did the dumbest things. Look at just a few examples:

Lack of faith

Matthew 8:23-27

23Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" 26He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm. 27The men were amazed and asked, "What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!"

Lack of understanding

Matthew 15: 15:15-16

15Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." 16"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them.

Lack of commitment

Matthew 19:10

10The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."

Lack of sensitivity

Matthew 19:13

13Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

Lack of compassion



Matthew 26:6-9

6While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, 7a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. 8When the disciples saw this, they were indignant. "Why this waste?" they asked. 9"This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor."

Lack of discipline

Matthew 26:40-41

40Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. 41"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Lack of loyalty

Matthew 26:50, 56

50...Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. 56...Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

To sum it up, the disciples were lacking. These are just examples from one gospel, I didn't pull out accounts from Mark, Luke, and John! Over the three year period of the earthly ministry of Christ, these guys goofed up multiple times. Yet, at the end, eleven out of the twelve (Judas committed suicide) were commissioned by Christ to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Matthew 28:18-20

18Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



Look at the men that Jesus is sending out. They had sinned against Jesus. They had wronged one another. Yet, Jesus showed them long-suffering. He never said, “That’s it. I can’t take you guys anymore. You drive me crazy. Peter, keep your mouth shut for once. Thomas, quit doubting. John, stop being so moody. I’ve had it!” Instead, Jesus continued in love towards them. He forgave their sins. He helped them to be better people than they ever thought possible. He taught them, encouraged them, rebuked them, lived with them. He did not abandon them, give up, or walk away. They were lacking everything that Jesus had and He was willing to give them everything they needed.

Do you look at your life and realize that you have done dumb things? You are in good company. We are all dumb disciples. But God shows us His patience. He not only extends this gift to us but He asks us to extend it to others. The dumb disciples were now asked to disciple others! The same is true for us. Maybe we can write a book “Long suffering for Dummies!”



DAY 4

Application

Rejoice in our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is eternally patient with us!

In what other ways do you think the long-suffering attribute of Christ was shown to the disciples during His time on earth?

How can you relate to the “dumb disciples”?

Jesus did not have perfect disciples. Yet, they still did amazing things by the power of God. How could understanding the patience of God enable us to be sent forth into this world?

How can we extend long-suffering to other “dumb disciples”?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: 2 Peter 3:3-15

2 Peter 3:3-15

3First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. 4They will say, "Where is this 'coming' he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation." 5But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. 8But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 10But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. 14So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him. 15Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.

Verse 3-4: Christ promised to return. Yet, He left earth 2,000 years ago. People will begin, and have already begun, to question this truth. They will say that there is no change in life. The cycle of life continues: babies are born, they live, they die. Nothing else occurs. There is nothing more beyond the grave. They say this due to their own evil desires of wanting to live for themselves. So, they laugh at anyone who holds onto the hope of eternity.

Verse 5-7: The evidence of creation is overwhelming yet it is suppressed. Why? Because to acknowledge a Creator would be to acknowledge His ways. That is why past judgments, like the flood, are ignored. This leads to refusal to accept the truth that a future judgment is coming. For if people would admit to judgment, then they would become aware of the need



to confess sin, this would lead to a need for a Savior. They are refusing to go down the path of eternal life, which leads them onto the path of destruction.

Verse 8-10: The scoffers do not realize that the delay of Christ's coming is for their good. What they mock is really the only possibility for their salvation. On God's calendar, it has only been about two days since He left the earth. He is not being slow by His schedule. He has the perfect time set aside for His return. But His plan displays His patience. His act of long-suffering, even to those who mock Him and His children, is because He desires them to come to repentance. But there will be a specific moment of time for the day of the Lord. Sadly, then it will be too late for people to accept Him as Savior.

Verse 11-13: Since we know about the Day of the Lord, we need to live a life that reflects the truth of His return. We are to look forward to the eternal life that has been granted to us by God. Our actions should be holy and our lives should be godly. Despite the ways other treat us, we are to stand firmly in the truth that Christ will return. Our lives will prove the truth to those who mock us. Hopefully, it will cause others to recognize the long-suffering of the Lord and turn from their wicked ways.

Verse 14-15: We are to be living in a way that looks forward to Christ's return. We do not want to be ashamed of our foolish actions but instead we want to be "caught" living boldly for Him. Each day that the Lord tarries, we can remind ourselves that His patience brought more to salvation. The long-suffering of God = salvation for people. The patience of God is eternally linked to the salvation of God in our lives and in other's as well.



DAY 5

Application

Spend time thanking God for His long-suffering towards you which led to your salvation. Each morning realize that Christ could return at any moment so live like you believe this truth. If the Lord tarries, thank Him each night for the new people added to His eternal kingdom.

How are we already seeing the evidences of scoffers in our day who disbelieve the return of Christ, God's creation of the world, and also His judgments?

How does looking forward to the day of God help us to live holy and godly lives? How does understanding the long-suffering of God enable you to live for Him?

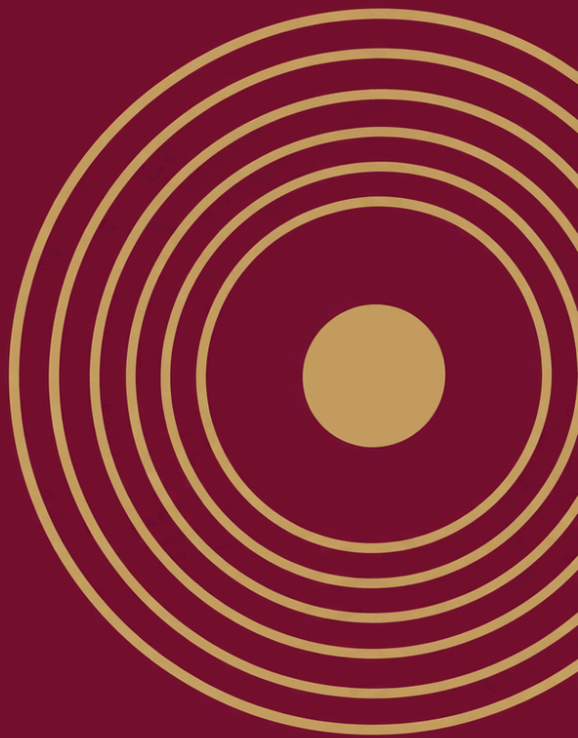
What have you learned about the patience of God?

How will you apply yourself to receive knowledge?

Who can you pray for to receive more of the knowledge of God?

God's Greatest Hits

RESONATE



God's Greatest Hits

Sweet Child of Mine

Mercy and Grace: two words that are used so often to describe God. I believe we often forfeit their meaning through overuse. The power that is in the words transforms lives for eternity. We have been receivers of both if we have accepted Christ Jesus as our Lord and Savior. (If anyone wishes to talk more about this, please talk to your root group leader. They would willingly answer any questions you may have.) This week we will study these words from a receivers' standpoint. For that is what we are. Receivers of mercy and grace! Receiver, be reminded this week of all that God has done for you.

DAY 1 / DAY 2 / DAY 3 / DAY 4 / DAY 5



DAY 1

The Word

Today's Scripture: John 8:2-11

I love to eat salt. I always have. As a child, I would sneak into the cabinet and eat the seasoned popcorn salt straight out of the container. I was not supposed to do this but I would do it anyway. One day, I walked out of the kitchen after my "binge" and saw my mom. She had "the look". She asked me, "Did you eat some of that popcorn salt?" I quickly answered, "no," as I proudly remembered that I had washed my hands to hide the evidence. (Yes, I am a salt addict and a liar!) She then said to me, "Go to the bathroom and look in the mirror." What a saw was a horrendous sight, I had orange popcorn salt smeared all over my face. The evidence was there. I could no longer deny it. I had eaten salt. I was caught red-handed, or should I say orange-faced.

This is just a light story compared to the evidence brought against a certain woman in the Bible. She was caught in the act of adultery. She was not asked to go look into the mirror, but to look at the face of God.

John 8:2-11

2At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Verse 2: The sun is rising. Jesus steps into the temple courts. All sorts of people gathered around, men and women, young and old, rich and poor. They desired to hear the Teacher's words. What would He tell them today? What could they learn? There was an air of excitement. Jesus sat down to begin teaching.



Verse 3: Suddenly, a group of religious leaders broke loudly into the scene. People are confused as they hear shouting. A woman is forced to stand before them. They had dragged this woman in. I wonder if she showed bruises from where they had grabbed her. Only they knew from how far away they brought this woman. How frightening it would have been for this woman to be in the middle of a crowd of angry men. She was scared. And now she was humiliated as they force her to stand in front of everyone. These were people of her community. Some were neighbors, friends, maybe even relatives. She recognized the faces. They knew who she was. This was not a stranger. Yet, the woman knew how quickly these people could turn on her. She was in danger because of what she had done.

Verse 4-5: She had been caught in the act of adultery. There was no denying her guilty verdict. These men may have walked into the middle of the scene. She would have had to quickly dress, not knowing her fate. For legally, adulterers, both the man and the woman, would have been stoned. This was stated in the law of Moses.

The law of Moses is the first 5 books of the Old Testament, known by our Jewish friends as the Torah. These books document the beginning of the world, the beginning of the Jewish religion, as well as the beginning of Jewish society. God gave laws to govern the people, to provide order and protection of the nation. The law they are referring to is found in Leviticus 20:10.

Leviticus 20:10

10 " 'If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

This woman realized that this was reality. She may have only a few moments to live. She knew she was a lawbreaker. There was no denying her guilt. She looked around and there was no one coming to her defense. And her boyfriend? He was nowhere to be found. She was all alone in a crowd. The death penalty had been proclaimed. The prosecution shuts his book with a smile, knowing that the Judge had to declare “Guilty”.

Verse 6: These men were all proud of themselves, thinking they had just trapped Jesus. If he agreed to send this woman to death, He could have been in trouble with the Roman government. The Romans were in charge of Israel. They did not allow the Jews to carry out the death penalty. By agreeing to stone this woman, the religious leaders could have had Jesus arrested by the Romans. On the other hand, if Jesus did not uphold the law of Moses than he would have been demoralized in front of the people. They viewed Jesus as a religious Teacher. If He did not support the law, then he would lose popularity with the people and gain the disdain of the Jews who love the law and recognize it as God’s Word. To go against the Word, would to be against God Himself. Yes, they had been clever in their trap. But they did not realize they were talking to the One who wrote the law!



What did Jesus do? He leaned over and began to write on the ground. We do not know what to write and we will not add to the Scripture by speculating. But what is obvious is that this is strange behavior. This is not your normal debate tactic. I have to wonder (this is just speculation) was He doing this to get all the eyes on Him and off of her? Was this the first show of grace extended to the woman: to take away those gawking at her and bring their attention to the Teacher playing in the dirt?

Imagine a court scene. The criminal is about to receive the verdict. Reporters are snapping away as the obviously guilty person awaits the death penalty. The head is hung in shame, waiting for the predicted outcome. Suddenly, the eyes move to the Judge. Bulbs are flashing as more and more people turn their attention to the Judge writing in the dirt. For a few moments, in a crowd, the woman can be alone as the stares are no longer on her.

Verse 7: Jesus continued his writing while the religious leaders became more and more adamant in asking their questions. Look at the difference: Jesus is calmly writing while the leaders become more and more demanding. Suddenly, the Writer sits up, looks the men in their eyes and speaks “If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

The prosecution is judged, not the defendant. The criminal is no longer on trial but the men who brought the accusations. The trial takes a twisted turn. The “innocent” are now standing with the woman as guilty. With one statement, they went from questioning Jesus to questioning themselves.

Verse 8-9: Only Jesus stayed the same. He went back to writing in the sand. Was this more grace? Did he extend grace to the ones who had tried to trap Him? He let them walk away without staring them down. He could have watched them squirm, ensnared in their own deceit. Instead, Jesus looked down. He heard them leave one by one. It seems that even the crowd that had gathered to hear Him teach left. They, too, were convicted by the statement. Only Jesus was there, stooped over in His seated position, writing in the sand. The woman was still standing where the men had forced her to be. She was no longer in front of the crowd. She could have run away. But she didn’t. She stood where she was in her guilt and her shame with the man who had just saved her life.

Verse 10: Since Jesus had been seated, when he straightened up from the ground, He would have been looking up to the woman standing there. This is the physical picture of grace. It is the willingness to forfeit the right to look down on someone in judgment but instead look up to her from a position of humility.

From here, Jesus spoke, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” The term “woman” in that culture was kind way to address her. What other names did the crowd call her? What other names had she called herself? But here, she receives the grace of a courteous address.



Verse 11: She replies in respect. She does not know who this Man is. But she knows he is worthy of honor. She waits for His reply. It is a reply of mercy. “Then, neither do I condemn you...” Jesus had the right to judge her. He was the only one in that crowd who had never sinned. He honestly could have been the first to throw a stone at her. But instead of giving her what she deserved, which is judgment, He gave her what she did not deserve, mercy. And His mercy continued as He does not hold her past against her but instead exhorts her to change her life.

There is another court scene. You are the defendant. You are guilty as charged and you know it. The prosecution makes its case and smiles knowing the Judge must declare you guilty. You deserve it, there is no denying it. Your shame and guilt hang around you. The mob stands ready, willing to let you die for your sins. Suddenly, a voice says, “I’ll take her place.” All eyes are drawn to the Judge. He puts down His gavel and takes off His black robe. He commands the police officer to take off your shackles and put them on Him. He tell you, “I do not condemn you for I will condemn Myself instead. I will take your place. Go and sin, no more.” They lead Him out for execution. That is the mercy of the cross.



DAY 1

Application

Spend time in worship to the God of grace and mercy.

Confess your sins. Write a prayer asking for the mercy of God.

Where is Jesus asking you to receive His mercy and now to leave your life of sin? How are you going to walk away from it? Who can hold you accountable?

To what person in your life are you like the religious leaders, bringing accusations against this person? How can you be more like Jesus to that person?



DAY 2

The Word

Today's Scripture: Titus 3:4-7

You are a wretch. Did that hurt your feelings? It's the truth. Sometimes, we need to hear the truth. We often forget how terrible we are. We think of ourselves as "good" people. If we do think we have done something wrong, we justify it by saying, "it's not that bad". Meaning, even in our "badness" there is good because it is not as bad as someone else who must be worse. The Scriptures, however, paint a different picture on our true selves.

Titus 3:3

3At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Verse 3: This is not what positive speakers tell you to say. But do something for me. Read this verse in first person. That is a definition of who you are. In fact, let's read it together in the modern paraphrase from The Message by Eugene Peterson:

It wasn't so long ago that we ourselves were stupid and stubborn, dupes of sin, ordered every which way by our glands, going around with a chip on our shoulder, hated and hating back.

There is nothing pretty there. There is nothing likeable. There is nothing worth redeeming. That is who you were before Christ. Look at yourself. You were nothing but misery to yourself and others. "Why are you torturing us?" you may ask. Because I want you to know that there was nothing in you that deserved the grace and mercy of God. Nothing. There was no part of you that moved God to be merciful. It had nothing to do with you. It is just the character of God. He is merciful and full of grace. It is part of who He is.

Titus 3:4-7

4But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Verse 4: When did the kindness and love of God appear? The moment Jesus stepped on earth. Now, God had been kind and loving since the beginning. However, it was when Jesus stepped into time as God becoming man that the fullness of kindness and love was made evident to the world. This is more readily understood from John 1:14:



John 1:14

14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Verse 5: Jesus came to save us. That was His purpose in coming. His reasoning behind salvation was not because we were somewhat good and so God said, “Look at them trying really hard, let’s help them the rest of the way to salvation.” It had nothing to do with our “good works”. It all had to do with His character of mercy. We cannot move Him to salvation. In fact, in our natural selves, we shake our fists at His salvation. We want to do things our way and in our own strength.

This is a debate in many denominations. They believe that good works get you into heaven. Others believe that the cross plus good works ensures salvation. Still I have heard, that the cross initially gets you salvation but then you must do good works or you could lose your salvation. These maddening lies are all wrong. It has nothing to do with us. We cannot earn or keep salvation. It is only by the mercy of God. He alone saved us. By ourselves, we are covered with sin. That is all we are capable of doing. God washed us clean when we were “born again”. (This is the “rebirth”. We are born once physically and we must be born spiritually in order to be saved for eternity.)

We are not only washed at the rebirth but also by the renewal of the Holy Spirit. This means that God continues to extend mercy and grace to us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to renew us. We were in dead in our transgression, in our wretched ways, now we have the Spirit within us to continue to transform us from ourselves to more like Christ.

Verse 6: The giving of the Spirit was the pinnacle example of grace. It was nothing we deserved. It was a gift from heaven. God Himself within us. Think of this marvelous truth. God is in you. You have all the wisdom, character, joy and all of God inside of you. That he would be willing to allow these messy tents to be the house of God Himself is amazing grace. This gift was given to us at the because of Jesus.

Verse 7: Jesus died on the cross as a perfect substitute for us. We deserved to die for our sins. But Jesus took our place. The Sinless died for the sinners. His death enabled Him to justify us. This means we criminals, who had broken God’s law, now have perfect records. Our crimes are not only not held against us but it is as if they had never occurred. We are justified before God. We did not have the right to ask for justification. But God gave it through His grace. Now that we are justified we are children, heirs, of God looking forward to eternity with Him. What you were is no longer held against you. Instead of looking back onto your past sine, you can look forward to your new life. This is what Grace and Mercy does. It washes away the past so that you can walk boldly with joy into the future.

If you are struggling today with any past sins, bring them to the cross. Lay them down. Realize you do not have to work to make up for what you did. Christ did all the work. He is extending His grace and mercy to you. Receive it.



DAY 2

Application

How does believing we are good people keep us from salvation?

What is the importance of understanding who we were before Christ?

Why do we desire to work for salvation?

How does trying to do “good works” for the sake of ensuring salvation keep us from Christ?

In what ways do you work for salvation? Confess it and lay it at the cross.



DAY 3

The Word

Today's Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

God is merciful. God is full of grace. God extends mercy and grace upon us, even when we were unlovely in our sins. We did nothing to move the heart of God to this kindness. It is only by His nature that we were recipients of these extravagant gifts. Mercy prevented us from getting the judgment we deserved, for it was inflicted on His son. Grace is all the good gifts He gives though we are worthy of nothing. If we cannot earn mercy and grace, but they are given, what are we to do? Worship. This is the only response we have to a God of mercy and grace. No better is this illustrated by a nameless woman who shames us all with her heart of praise.

Luke 7:36-50

36Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. 39When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner." 40Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" 50Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Verse 36: Jesus has accepted an invitation for dinner at a Pharisee's house. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the day. If you wanted someone to write an essay on the



appropriate ways to worship God, these guys would be the ones to ask. They knew when it was appropriate to stand, sit, kneel, or lie prostrate on the floor. They could tell you the words to say. They would have had multiple of verses and psalms memorize to recite to the Lord. These were your experts.

Verse 37: In the middle of this dinner, a shocking scene takes place. A woman walked in uninvited. She was not just any woman, she was a sinful woman, most likely a prostitute. Imagine a prostitute walking into a dinner at the preacher's house. She had probably been made fun of by this group, maybe used as the illustration of vileness, and was never spoken to by any of them. They would have walked clear away from her if they saw her on the streets. Their judgments of her would have been known to her. Yet, still she came. What brought her? She had heard Jesus, the Preacher of preachers, was at the house. So, she risked humiliation and rejection and walked in. She was carrying a jar of alabaster, probably all she owned in the world.

Verse 38: If you are familiar with this story, do not rush over it because of familiarity. She is standing behind Jesus at first. She is sobbing. The tears pour out and her cry fills the silent rooms. Everyone is watching her. She cannot control herself. She cannot even speak. Tears will not stop. They fall on His feet. She sees the tears falling on Him. In a moment of abandon of reason, she falls at His feet and begins to wipe His feet with tears. She had not rationally brought a towel. This was not planned out. She had grabbed a jar of perfume and headed to the Pharisee's home. I don't know if she fully knew what she would do there. She just had to come. Once she saw Him, the tears flowed. While she is wiping His feet, she kisses them. She pours perfume on them. It was as if she was saying, I don't deserve to kiss your face or to pour perfume on your head. You know who I am and what I have done.

Verse 39: She was not the only one who recognized her evil ways. The Pharisee had his opinion on her as well as Jesus. In his twisted mind, he thought that a true prophet would kick this woman out. Isn't that what religious people do? We inform them, "Your kind is not allowed in here". Their dress, their actions, their speech, their lifestyle does not conform to ours so we block them out. But God handles them, and handles us, differently.

Verse 40-43: Jesus uses an illustration to show Simon, the Pharisee, his wrong understanding of the situation. Simon was seeing a woman in debt of sin. He saw this massive heap of wrongs piled up on this one woman. Yet, he never saw his sin. In comparison to her, he was "good". In comparison to God, Simon owed a debt that could not be paid back. Both needed a cancellation of debt. When we see our debt of sin and allow God to cancel it in mercy, love should spring forth in us. But we must realize His mercy in order to respond in worship.

Verse 44-45: Jesus has turned the tables on us again. When the woman walks in, we see a prostitute, a woman of sin who barges in uninvited. Yet, suddenly we realize, she was the true hostess of the night. The Pharisee neglected the common practices of courtesy for that



culture. The Pharisee has purposely not made Jesus feel welcomed in his home, yet the woman makes it evident that Jesus was welcome in the home of her heart. This hostess receives commendation from her guest. Verse 47-48: His eyes are on her. He can smell the perfume that had been bought by the money she earned from her profession. He can hear her wailing. Suddenly, He stops speaking to Simon and speaks directly to her. She hears His voice. Mercy. The forgiveness of sins. Mercy. She received mercy. Who ever gave that to her, a prostitute? She had been used by men, never the recipient of mercy. Now, she was the recipient of the mercy of God Himself. A God who did allowed even a prostitute to come near.

Verse 49-50: The other guests are not happy with His proclamation. They murmur among themselves, saying righteous and pious things. But Jesus doesn't care. He is looking at someone who has received salvation. Only one that night had faith in Jesus. The one that society had cast away as worthless, disgusting, wretched, beyond hope was the one who was saved. It was the religious leaders who missed the peace of knowing that God has saved them.



DAY 3

Application

Ask God to show you if you have any person, or groups of people, that you condemn. Ask Him to help you to see them through His eyes.

Why is our praise not lavish like this woman’s worship?

How can we begin to live as people who love the God of mercy and grace?



DAY 4

The Word

Today's Scripture: Hebrews 4:14-16

Hebrews 4:14-16

14Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. 16Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Verse 14: Jesus is compared to a high priest. What was a high priest? The Nelson's Bible Illustrated Dictionary defines this position this way:

...a chief priest of the Hebrew people...The high priest was distinguished from his fellow priest by the clothes he wore, the duties he performed, and the particular requirements placed upon him as spiritual head of God's people...its holder had to be without physical defect as well as holy in conduct...He could participate in all priestly ministry, but certain functions were given only to him...The most important responsibility of the high priest was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement... On this day, he alone entered the Holy Place inside the veil before God. Having made sacrifices for himself and for the people, he brought the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, "God's throne". This he did to make atonement for himself and the people for all their sins committed during the year just ended. It is with this particular service that the ministry of Jesus as high priest is compared...

To atone for the sin of the people, a sacrifice was made each year by the high priest. This sacrifice was just a foreshadowing of the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. The priest had to offer a yearly animal sacrifice. But the death of Jesus was for once and all. So, when Jesus went to the heavens, He was sprinkling His blood on the mercy seat. We can hold onto our faith firmly for this sacrifice is eternal. It is solid, not wavering, not needing to be repeated. We can stand firm in faith in Christ's work as high priest.

Verse 15: Our high priest can relate to us. Christ was not removed from us. He left the glory of heaven to become like us. He experienced the "earth life". He faced temptation, every kind of temptation. Yet, he never sinned. So, He knows how it feels to be tempted. He can relate to you in your struggles. Remember, being tempted is not wrong; it is falling into



temptation that causes sin.

Verse 16: Because of Christ being our High Priest, we can approach the throne of grace with confidence. Basically, we can come to God with every need, every situation, every success, every failure, every feeling, every thought, everything! We do not have to beg to come in. We do not have to hope we will be let in. We do not have to bribe our way in. We can come confidently for we know the Christ paved the way for us to come. This is such a privilege that we take for granted. We forget that our relationship with God came through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It cost Jesus His life to make a relationship with God available. This Nelson's Illustrated Bible describes atonement: ...the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between Himself and human beings. The word can be broken into three parts which express this great truth in simple but profound terms: "at-one-ment." Through God's atoning grace and forgiveness, we are reinstated to a relationship of at- one-ment with God, in spite of our sin.

We are state of being "at one" with God because of our High Priest's sacrifice. Our severed relationship has been restored. We were once at odds with God and now we are at peace with Him. So, we can come to Him in confidence. We can confess our sins and know that we will receive mercy. We can explain our problems and know that we will find grace to help us. God is on His throne willing to give grace and mercy to any who come. Are you willing to approach Him today?

Praise Jesus for being a High Priest who made the ultimate sacrifice for us to approach the throne of God. Thank the Lord for the mercy and grace we find there.



DAY 4

Application

How is it comforting to know that Jesus is a High Priest that can relate to us?

When should we approach the throne of grace? How often do we?

How does grace and mercy cover every situation we are in?



DAY 5

The Word

Today's Scripture: Luke 23:32-33

We have studied the attributes of God: Mercy and Grace. We titled this week "Sweet Child of Mine". This amazing fact is that God, in His mercy and grace, calls us to be His children. He knows our rebellion, our confusion, our inconsistencies yet He wanted us to be His own. He extends His arms out and shows us scars from His crucifixion that says, "Child, I love you this much". He wraps those arms around us, to hold us for eternity. Sometimes, we forget the sacrifice that He made in order to speak mercy and grace to us. But there is one who was there. He knows. He only had a short time left. But those arms of mercy reached out to Him before it was too late. He was the criminal who became a child.

Luke 23:32-33

32Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. 33When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals—one on his right, the other on his left.

Verse 32-33: Three men were led to their deaths. Three men walked the road to execution. Two were guilty as charged. They were placed on either side of the innocent One. Jesus was in the center, arms stretched out to both of them. Nails were driven in His wrists and His feet. Blood was flowing. Pain was searing through His body. All of them were suffering. As if the physical torture was not enough, verbal insults began to be reeled at Jesus.

Luke 23:35-37

35The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." 36The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar 37and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

Verse 35-37: Mockery. Pain. Torture. Humiliation. God Himself on a cross. Suddenly, a new person adds to the verbal abuse.

Luke 23:39

39One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"



Verse 39: You would think someone in the same predicament would sympathize. Yet, this man, also on a cross, joins in the mockery. What is it in us that joins in to make fun of others? All of us are people, we are all in the same predicament, yet we will add our abuse in a crowd. It is as foolish as a crucified man putting down another crucified Man. But one voice comes to His defense.

Luke 23:40-41

40But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? 41We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Verse 40-41: It is not a disciple who comes to the rescue. It is not even a decent citizen. It is a criminal. That criminal had more sense than the people in the crowd. In a short amount of time, he had observed Jesus enough to recognize Him as innocent. And he confesses himself as guilty and deserving of the punishment. He realized the weight of his guilt to the point where he did not feel like he could ask for mercy.

Luke 23:42

42Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Verse 42: To be remembered in the kingdom of God was a request for grace. He knew he did not deserve heaven so he could not ask for mercy, the forgiveness of his sins. But he asks to just be remembered. That, he knew, would be grace, a gift, beyond what he deserved. He just did not realize that he was looking Mercy in the face.

Luke 23:43

43Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Verse 43: A criminal receives a pardon. That is mercy. A criminal gains eternal life. That is grace. In a moment of time, this man receives both. He came to the cross and received mercy and grace. The same is true today. Criminals are still being pardoned and receiving eternal life. They realize that the world scorns the true way to God. They go against the crowd and confess their guilt to Christ while acknowledging His perfection. Then they ask for what they do not deserve and receive mercy and grace.

Praise God for when you received mercy and grace at the cross. If you have not done this or are unsure about this, please talk to your root group leader. They would love to share with you their journey to the cross.



DAY 5

Application

Who do you know that needs the mercy of salvation? Pray for that person here.

We are often disgusted by the people in the world and their lifestyles. How can we stop judging them, since we once were under the same sentence that they are under, and begin to reach out to them in mercy and grace?

Write your own personal definitions for the words “mercy” and “grace”.
