

KHESSED



MARVELING AT GOD'S
INFINITELY COMPLEX LOVE.

SERMON SERIES CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

Hesed is a Hebrew word found throughout Scripture that not only reflects the character of God, but the very heart of God. It is a word that has a gravitational pull. Because other Hebrew words are attached to it and give it life, the word creates a multifaceted meaning when understood in context. *Hesed* has also been compared to a diamond; multifaceted, complex, and beautiful. And like a diamond, we will pick this word up, turn it around, and see it from different angles. By examining it from all directions, we will allow the light of Scripture to shine on our own hearts, helping us connect to the heart of God. This connection to God's heart will lead us to Jesus and better prepare us to invite people into conversations about Him all over our city. These conversations will be easy to start because we will be right where God wants us.

Throughout this study, we will spend our time *marveling at God's infinitely complex love*. By doing five days of personal study each week and then spending time in community discussing the heart of God, we are convinced we will be challenged and grow in our ability to see the world as God sees it, through the eyes of *hesed*. Our goal is not to determine an exact definition of the word. We ARE hoping to fall more deeply in love with the Person from whom we have no right to expect anything, but have received everything. As we dive into this study, let us come with a heart of worship, a mind ready for wonderment, and the expectation that the Holy Spirit will send us as witnesses to a watching world.

In Christ,



Angela Cirocco
Group Life & Women's Minister
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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

THIS STUDY GUIDE WAS DESIGNED TO FOLLOW THE SERMONS PREACHED AT NORTHWEST BIBLE CHURCH FROM JANUARY 9 THROUGH FEBRUARY 27, 2022.

All Scripture quotes from ESV Bible. Sermon audio files can be found at www.northwestbible.org/sermons. This guide is best used in conjunction with each sermon, but can stand alone if necessary.

To help you *marvel at God's infinitely complex love* and to connect our hearts to God's heart, each chapter contains:

- reading and questions for five days of personal study
- a weekly group discussion guide
- supplemental information (commentary, vocabulary)
- complementary practices (prayer, reflection, research)

In addition to the Biblical characters and stories related to the sermon topics, we've included a modern illustration of each week. We hope this combination of ancient and modern stories will help you marvel at God's heart for others and *start surprisingly easy conversations about Jesus all over our city because we are convinced, where God has us is where Jesus is*. We have created this guide to be flexible to meet your spiritual growth needs. Please use this tool as you see fit. However, our prayer is that you will embrace both the group discussion and personal study to experience the corresponding joys of time alone with your Heavenly Father and time in fellowship with the family of God.



MESSAGE TO SMALL GROUP LEADERS

It would be nearly impossible to discuss every question in a typical 90-minute group gathering, so please don't try. Before your group meets, select a handful of questions from the discussion guide and balance them with a variety of the daily questions. Choose questions you think the group can have robust conversations about, or solicit the group members' input for particular questions they want to address. Remember, the goal is not to answer every question, but rather to *marvel at God's infinitely complex love*.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTION TYPES

RELATE

– “easy answer” questions for getting to know each other

RENEW

– questions to explore the Scripture passages in a conversational manner

REACH

– challenges for application outside of your small group meeting

PREPARATION

Psalm 136

To prepare our hearts to *marvel at God's infinitely complex love*, we will look at Psalm 136 together. This song is called the Great Hallel, which means this is the Psalm of Great Praise. It praises God for His goodness and power. It praises God for His creation, for His redeeming work, and for His relationship with the people He loves. The psalmist tells us to give thanks to God, who is over all and has given us all. But this is more than the history of Israel. It is a poem to continue to help you *marvel at the infinitely complex love of God*. Over and over again, He pours out His everlasting *hesed* on you. This is a song that calls for a response. Our response is to give thanks for the *hesed* we have received. As you read through this Psalm, allow the incredible, unthinkable, infinitely complex love that God has for each and every one of us to wash over you. His love endures forever. The *hesed* love is one of covenant, of steadfastness, of unchanging loyalty. We are reminded that, through Israel's experience, we all get to experience what God has for us. Let's allow our hearts to connect to God through this song as we recognize that His love surely endures forever.

Read Psalm 136. Read it again. Read it in different translations.

To prepare your heart for the next seven weeks, write a thank-you note to the Lord. Consider including:

- The great things He has done in your life
- His great loyal love for you
- Ways He has rescued you
- Things He has created or made way for you

Now, take time to *marvel at God's infinitely complex love*. Record your thoughts or a drawing on the next page.

Record your thoughts or a drawing here.





WEEK ONE

Exodus 34

BACKGROUND

God promised Abraham to make his descendants into a great nation, to bless the world through them, and to give them land (Genesis 12, 15). When Exodus opens, the Israelites (Abraham's descendants) are indeed numerous, but are slaves. God recruits Moses to persuade Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt so He can bring them to the land He has promised and dwell with them. Pharaoh rebels, and God performs ten plagues in Egypt. Eventually Pharaoh lets them go. The Israelites watch God part the Red Sea so they can evade the Egyptians. God leads them through the wilderness. He provides water for them, and daily bread (manna) falls from the sky each morning. Despite God's presence with them and proving His covenant love (*hesed*) for them, the Israelites often complain and rebel. Moses goes up Mount Sinai to receive God's instructions for how the Israelites are to live as God's holy people.

DAY 1:

Read Exodus 32–34

1. Summarize the events that took place in these chapters.
2. After the golden calf fiasco, God told Moses He wanted to destroy Israel and start over with Moses (32:7-10). Moses begged God not to. What two reasons did Moses give in 32:11-14?
3. What did God tell Moses He would do in 33:2-3? What reason did Moses give to God for reconsideration (33:15-16)?

DAY 2:

Read Exodus 34:1–8

1. What did Moses do in vv. 1-4? Why?
2. Scholars describe vv. 6-7 as the central, defining moment of the Old Testament because God reveals His character to Moses. Write out the verses here (Really, do it. It will help you remember them!)
3. V. 6 is the only place in Scripture God repeats His sacred name, Yahweh (“The LORD, the LORD” in your Bible). Read Exodus 3:13-15. How did God define His name? How does the description of His character in 34:6-7 expand that definition?

DAY 3:

Read Exodus 34:9–35

1. Remember on Day 1, God told Moses He would no longer go with Israel. On Day 2, God revealed His *hesed* character to Moses. What does Moses ask of God again in v. 9? What is God's response in v. 10? Why do you think God responded this way? (hint: use vv. 6-7 to help with your answer.)

2. Notice the pattern of what God says to Moses in ch. 34:

In vv. 6-7, summarize what He says about Himself:

In v. 10, He says, "Behold, I am making a _____."

In v. 11, God says, "Observe what I _____ you this day."

What is significant about the order? What does this say about God?

3. What was your first impression when you read vv. 11-16? Read the **call out** on “covenant” below and Exodus 34:6-7. Now re-read vv. 12-16. How do you see God’s character infused in these verses? Why did He give these commands?

Call out: בְּרִית (b^{erîṭ}) covenant

Covenant making was a major cultural custom in the ancient near east. Although it signified a legal agreement between two parties with an oath, God’s covenant with Israel was more. It was both legal and sacred, and involved the permanent exchange of life throughout generations—Israel belonged to God and He alone was their God. Relationally, covenants “call for self-giving loyalty and sacrificial love. Divine covenants reveal the saving plan of God for establishing communion with Israel and the nations, ultimately fulfilled by the death and resurrection of Christ.”¹

4. In vv. 11-26, God gives commands to Israel. Throughout these commands, where do you see examples of His self-description from vv. 6-7 (merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, etc.)? List at least two examples.

¹Hahn, S. (2016). Covenant. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

5. What happened to Moses' face in vv. 29-35? Why (v. 29)? Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Are you different after spending time with God? How can people tell?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

From an early age, Jim Elliot felt God's call to have conversations about Jesus with people who had never heard of Him. Jim met his wife Elisabeth at Wheaton College, and they were married in 1953. They moved to Ecuador and served as missionaries. Jim longed to move further into the jungle to minister to the Aucas, a dangerous tribe known for indiscriminate killing. Jim gathered a team who located and initiated contact with the Aucas. On January 8, 1956, the Auca people killed Jim and the other four members of his team. Elisabeth mourned her husband but felt proud of his devotion to the Lord. She decided to stay in Ecuador—she wanted to share Jesus with the people who had killed her husband. An Auca woman named Dayuma taught Elisabeth their language and took her to live among the Aucas in 1958. Elisabeth lived in their village and taught them from her Bible. Within two years, most of the tribe accepted the God of *Hesed*. Through Elisabeth's abounding steadfast love for them and her forgiveness of them, they experienced the grace and truth offered to them through Jesus. God's mission to reach the Auca people continued because of His *hesed*, manifested through Elisabeth Elliot.

DAY 5:

Read Exodus 34:6-7

⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in *hesed* and *emet*, ⁷keeping *hesed* for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.” (ESV)

1. Read these verses in several different translations. What differences do you notice? How do the differences help you understand God’s heart?

2. When have you experienced God’s mercy, grace, and patience (slow to anger)?

3. Describe how God's *hesed* (steadfast, faithful, loyal, covenant love) is different from the love our culture experiences.

4. How does God's forgiveness give you hope? How does His justice (v. 7: "who will by no means clear the guilty") encourage you?

COMMENTARY

Verse seven begins by reiterating God's steadfast love (*hesed*) that He keeps (maintains, guards) for thousands. He forgives sin, which is good news for us! We love to think about God forgiving the sins we commit; it may be a different story when we think about the sins done to us. God's faithful love, truth, and justice all co-exist in His nature. Does He really punish children for the sins of their parents? Scripture is clear that each person is responsible for their own sin. God forgives, but He may not take away the consequences of our sin, which do impact those around us (including our families and the generations after us.) If we were to put His *hesed* on one side of a balanced scale and His visiting iniquity on the other side, the *hesed* (to thousands) would far outweigh the iniquity (to the third or fourth generations). This God of abundant love really does deserve our worship!

5. How does Jesus, the God of *hesed emet* (steadfast love, grace, truth, faithfulness), stand out from the culture around us? Think of a way you can winsomely talk about these attributes in a conversation about Him, drawing on your own experiences.

GOING DEEPER

Memorize Exodus 34:6-7.

Compare the similarities and differences between John 1:14-18 and the Exodus passages we have studied this week:

	Exodus	John 1:14-18
Where does God dwell?	33:7-11	v. 14
Who sees God's glory? How?	33:18-23	v. 14
What is God like?	34:6-7	vv. 14, 16-18
How did people see God?	33:20	v. 18

JOURNAL PROMPT

Break down each phrase of Exodus 34:6-7 and journal how you have experienced God's:

Mercy/Compassion

Graciousness

Patience (slow to anger)

Abounding in steadfast love

Abounding in faithfulness

Forgiveness

We become what we behold. When we ponder, reflect, journal, and talk about God's steadfast love and faithfulness, we will be more readily able to share about it with others who may not know Him. Look for ways to share about God's mercy, grace, patience, steadfast love, faithfulness, and forgiveness this week with someone who may not know Him. Be prepared to talk about it with your small group.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Exodus 34 and John 1:1-18

RELATE

1. Think of a time when you felt loved by someone. Describe that for the group.
2. Name a fact that you know beyond a shadow of a doubt is true.

RENEW

3. God chose Israel to be His holy nation, but they consistently rebelled. Has someone you poured into betrayed you? How did you react?
4. Scholars describe Exodus 34:6-7 as the central, defining moment of the Old Testament because God reveals His character to Moses. Read the verses aloud. How do these verses help you marvel at God's heart?
5. After saying His name in v. 6, what is the first word God uses to describe Himself? What does this tell you about God?
6. Read the **call out** for *hesed* and *emet* on page 10. Describe how God's *hesed* (steadfast, faithful, loyal, covenant love) is different from the love our culture experiences.
7. What does it mean that God is the source of truth (*emet*)? How does this differ from our culture's value of truth?
8. The words used for "grace and truth" in John 1:14, 17 are the Greek translations for the Hebrew words *hesed* and *emet*. As you read John 1:14-18, how do you see Jesus embodying God's definition of himself in Exodus 34:6-7?
9. How does God's forgiveness give you hope (Exodus 34:7)? How does His justice ("who will by no means clear the guilty") encourage you?

10. What happened to Moses' face in Exodus 34:29-35? Why (v. 29)? Read 2 Corinthians 3:18. Are you different after spending time with God? How can people tell?

REACH

11. How have you experienced Jesus' *hesed emet* (grace and truth) in your life? How can you use that in an easy-to-start conversation about Jesus?
12. Spend time praying together for the people you want to have conversations about Jesus' *hesed emet* with. If you can't think of anyone, pray God will bring someone into your life and that you will have courage to talk about Jesus. As these conversations come up this week, share them with your group!

TEACHING NOTES





WEEK TWO

Numbers 14

BACKGROUND

The Israelites have been rescued from the oppression of the Egyptians. The Lord has opened up the Red Sea for them to pass by into safety. He is leading them to the foot of the Mountain of Sinai, where He will deliver the 10 commandments. The people are camped across the desert, two million strong, where God commands Moses to take a census. This is how the Book of Numbers received its name. Based on this, Moses organized the followers and prepared to move them towards the promised land to invade this area. But the people grumbled, first against the manna, the bread they ate daily, and then against the leadership. Despite the complaining, Moses sent out twelve spies into the land to bring back a report. Ten spies created fear among the followers and convinced the crowd to rebel. Amid this rebellion, the glory of the Lord was revealed. Moses reminded the Israelites of what He has done (13-16) and who He is (17-19).

DAY 1:

Read Numbers 14:1-10

1. What are the Israelites (other than the leaders) focused on (specifically v. 3)? What are the leaders focused on?

Call out: לִיָּן (lîn) grumble, complain

[lîn] is a verb that means to grumble, whine, or complain, directed at a powerful or responsible person. It has connotations of an act of rebellion. It is used 13 times in the Old Testament, all of which occurred during the exodus from Egypt and were done by the Israelites. The Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains points out that it is like making wailing sounds from a dog (howling).²

2. What are the complaints (grumbles) of the people? In other words, what are they afraid of?

PRAYER

Lord, I am often stubborn, complaining, and downright rebellious. And yet, You pursue me. You pursue me when I want to turn back from wherever You are leading me. You pursue me when I want to go my own way. You pursue me when my fear paralyzes me. You pursue me when I think I know better. You pursue me when I refuse to listen to Godly counsel. You pursue me.

You pursue me because of who You are. You pursue me because of Your abounding love. You pursue me because of Your great love. Thank You. Lord, please forgive me. Please never give up on me. Continue to pursue me until I enter Your Sabbath-rest and fall at Your feet. Finally, Lord, let me be to others as You have been to me. Let me be patient and filled with grace and abounding love.

DAY 2:

Read Numbers 14:11-19

1. The Lord has two strong accusations against the people of Israel. What are they (v. 11)? How would we expect the Lord to react?

2. Moses petitions the Lord not to bring calamity based on what (at least two things)?

3. What have the local people heard about the Lord and His people?

4. Moses reminds the Lord of His character, not just what He has done. How is the Lord's character revealed in the word *besed* (translated "abounding in love")?

5. Moses says the Lord does not leave the guilty unpunished. Is that not what he is trying to stop? Is Moses trying to stop punishment or something else?

GOING DEEPER

Seven times the Israelites murmur or grumble against different things in the Book of Numbers. Look up each one and identify what they murmur against. What correspondence do these grumblings have in your life today? (Numbers 11:1–3, 4–6; 13:33–14:2; 16:3, 41; 20:2–5; 21:5).

DAY 3:

Read Numbers 14:20-39

1. The Lord bases His punishment on His glory. How are the two related?
2. What does the Lord say is different about Caleb (v. 24)? How do you compare?
3. The Israelites are worried about their children (v. 3). What does the Lord say will happen to their children (v. 33)? Why is this significant for their future?

4. The Lord continually says, "I will surely." Why is this significant? How does this relate to verses 11 and 22?

5. Do you think 40 years and, ultimately, death is a just punishment? Why or why not?

Call out: עַד-אֵנָּה how long?

This is not a question of length. This is an emotional mourning or lament. If it was from a human being, we would say it is an exasperated cry of desperate dependence. But it is the Lord who calls out. What does that mean for Him to cry out because of the treatment from His people? How much does it break His heart to see the ones He loves in rebellion? How do these two Hebrew words for "how long" help you marvel at the word *bessed*?

DAY 4:

Read Hebrews 4:1-13

1. How do we make sure we have not fallen short of the promised rest (see 3:19)?
2. God set a certain day, calling it “Today” (v. 7). What is this referring to?
3. What is the Gospel preached to the Israelites? What is the (full) Gospel preached to us?

DAY 5:

Read Numbers 14:17-19

1. How is forgiving and showing mercy a sign of the Lord's strength (v. 17)?
2. What is the difference between being forgiven and being pardoned?
3. Which of these characteristics most speak to you today: "The LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion." Why?
4. How do we deal with the forgiving nature of the Lord and the reality that He punishes the children for the sins of the father?

5. How does this passage reveal *besed*?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

My wife had been pleading with me to go to church. I had been refusing, but this night I decided to go (for whatever reason). Near the end of service, the pastor came and asked if I wanted to give my life over to Christ. That night, something very dark and evil died in me and something new was born. Many people hear my story and think I was involved in witchcraft and the occult. But that is not my story. My story is the same as everyone else's. My story is that I was covered in the worst filth of life, anger and full of hatred, and I was considered a lost cause by most people. Despite my brokenness, the omnipotent God of Heaven looked down and said, "Give me that one. The one that spits in my face, shakes his fist to Heaven, and swears he hates me. Give me the one no one else wants and watch what my love will do for him." When I encountered love that didn't care how mad I was, how much I hated, or what I had done and was still going to do, I couldn't escape it. That kind of love changed my life. Over the years I've grown from hating everyone to having compassion for anyone. ... Everyday I'm learning to put Christ first and trust Him for the rest. I'm learning that He has only my good in mind, if I will just get out of the way. I have decided that I can't do this or anything else by trying to be in first place. My name is Tim Skipper and I am second. (See Tim's full story at iamsecond.com)²

²Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament) (electronic ed.). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Numbers 14:11-25

RELATE

1. What was your family like growing up?
2. Were you more of a rule follower or a rebel? What influenced you to be this way?

RENEW

3. Where has the Lord shown you mercy? Can you clearly articulate which sins He has forgiven you for?
4. How have you seen the glory of the Lord in your life? Where and when?
5. Do you reflect the character of God? In which area (compassion, grace, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, slow to anger, abounding in love) do you need to grow the most?
6. Who do you need to forgive? Whose forgiveness do you need to seek?
7. How does this passage help your heart connect to God's heart?
8. How does this passage help you marvel at *besed*?
9. What are you currently grumbling about? How does Jesus speak into your grumbling?
10. Based on the character of God, how do you want the Lord to treat you in your rebellion?

REACH

11. How should you treat others based upon the way you have been treated?

12. Does this help you invite people into conversations about Jesus wherever God has you?

TEACHING NOTES



WEEK THREE

Ruth

BACKGROUND

The book of Ruth takes place after the nation of Israel settled in the promised land, but before they had a king. This is known as the time of the judges. The first verses tell us an Israelite man, Elimilech, took his family to Moab during a famine and his sons married Moabite women. Moab and Israel had a sordid past. They were distant cousins (Genesis 19:30-37). Moab tried to curse Israel and then enticed them to worship Baal while they wandered in the wilderness (Numbers 22-25). Despite all of this, God used Ruth, a Moabite woman, to display His covenant kindness, despite difficult circumstances and through the kindness of others.³

Throughout the book of Ruth, many of our English Bible versions translate *hesed* as “kindness.”

³ESV Study Bible, “Introduction to Ruth,” (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 475.

DAY 1:

Read Ruth 1

1. Summarize Ruth 1 in a few sentences.
2. What did Naomi tell her daughters-in-law to do in vv. 8-14? Why did she do that? (Read Deuteronomy 25:5-6 to help with your answer.)
3. What does Ruth pledge to Naomi in vv. 16-18? What is significant about this?

4. In v. 8, Naomi states a blessing over Orpah and Ruth. What was the kindness (*hesed*) that they showed Naomi and her family?

5. Describe a time someone was kind to you during a difficult circumstance. Looking back, can you see God's kindness to you through that person?

DAY 2:

Read Ruth 2

1. Summarize Ruth 2 in a few sentences.

2. Read Leviticus 19:9-10. What were the Israelites commanded to do with their fields during harvest time? What were Ruth's qualifications for gleaning in Boaz's fields?

3. List all that Boaz did for Ruth in vv. 8-16. How does this list compare with what was commanded in Leviticus 19:9-10?

4. What did Naomi mean when she said, “May he be blessed by the Lord, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!” (v. 20)? Whose kindness (*hesed*) is she referring to?

5. How can you show kindness to someone, much like Boaz treated Ruth? How might that lead to a conversation about Jesus?

FUN FACT:
an ephah equals
around 36 pounds

PRAYER

We often experience God's kindness through other people. Ruth's kindness to Naomi and Boaz, as well as Boaz's kindness to both women, show us this example. Thank God for the kindness He has shown to you, especially when it has been shown through other people. List specific instances. Ask Him to whom you can show kindness to and how.

DAY 3:

Read Ruth 3 & 4

1. Summarize Ruth 3-4 in two to three sentences.

2. What did Boaz say when he discovered Ruth at the threshing floor? Record his words from 3:10 here.

Call out: גֹּאֵל (gâ'al, gaw-al') kinsman redeemer

Hebrew word meaning to redeem, to buy back, to recover, most often done by a close relative. This word occurs 19 times in the short book of Ruth.

Maintaining family lines was imperative in ancient Israel. When a poor person needed to sell their land, a close relative (gâ'al) could buy it so it stayed within the family (Leviticus 25:23-25; Ruth 4:3). A practice called Levirate marriage ensured a childless dead man could have an heir (Deuteronomy 25:5-10; Ruth 1:11-13). His brother married his widow and any child born to them would belong to the line of the deceased (lessening the alive brother's inheritance. This could be why the closer relative did not want to marry Ruth.) Boaz was acting as Elimelech's and Mahlon's kinsman redeemer by buying both their land and producing an heir with Ruth.

GOING DEEPER

Read all of Ruth in one sitting. Write down all the places you see someone display kindness to another.

DAY 4:

Read John 17

1. Who is Jesus speaking to (v. 1)? What would you say is the theme and tone of John 17?
2. How is Jesus our kinsman redeemer (vv. 2-4)? What is the work God gave Jesus to do (v. 4)?
3. Even though the word *besed* isn't used here, do you see it displayed throughout the passage? Who shows it to whom? Explain your answer.

4. As believers, if we are to be *one* as the Father and the Son are *one* (vv. 20-21), how will that lead to kindness toward others? How will people believe God sent Jesus by seeing your life?
5. “that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” (v. 26). How has God loved Jesus? How has that extended to us? How can we show that love to others?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

Kelly McGuire was leaving a Chicago Bears football game with her husband when they saw a homeless woman outside of Millennium Station. She was holding a sign that read: “I am in need of winter boots and winter clothing items.” At first, Kelly did not want to stop, but she thought “that could be any one of my friends or family.” Kelly happened to have a bag of winter clothes, and even had leftover food. She chose God’s mission over her comfort and gave the woman her bag of clothes, food, and the boots she was wearing. She intended to walk back to the train in her socks. The homeless woman said, “I don’t want your feet to be cold,” and proceeded to give Kelly the old boots she was wearing. Kelly offered kindness to this woman. She was shocked that this woman who had nothing showed kindness in return at great cost to herself by offering her the boots off her own feet.

DAY 5:

Read Ruth 1:8, 2:20, 3:10

Ruth 1:8: But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, “Go, return each of you to her mother’s house. May the LORD deal *hesed* with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. (ESV)

1. Scholars say that *hesed* is more than an attitude or an emotion. It leads to activity that benefits another. How did Ruth and Boaz demonstrate that? How can you show *hesed*, kindness that benefits another?

Ruth 2:20: And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, “May he be blessed by the LORD, whose *hesed* has not forsaken the living or the dead!” Naomi also said to her, “The man is a close relative of ours, one of our redeemers.” (ESV)

2. *Hesed* used here can also be understood as someone helping another when that person is unable to help themselves. Name some examples of that from our study this week.

3. How does the above explanation point to the Gospel?

Ruth 3:10: And he said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter. You have made this last *hesed* greater than the first in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. (ESV)

4. Ruth had *hesed* (kindness) shown to her as a foreigner. How has God extended *hesed* to us through Jesus (see Romans 2:4, 5:8)? Take a minute and thank God for the gift of Jesus.

5. Ruth showed devotion, loyalty, and faithfulness to Boaz in response to the kindness he showed her. How can you show devotion, loyalty, and faithfulness to God in response to the kindness He has shown you? How might that overflow onto others?

JOURNAL PROMPT

This week, we have reflected on another aspect of *besed*: God's kindness. How has studying Ruth impacted how you understand God's love? Where did you see His kindness throughout the book? How has God shown you kindness? One way to have an easy-to-start conversation about Jesus is to show kindness to someone who does not know Him. Make a plan this week: who will you show kindness to and how? When they thank you, have a response ready to lead to a conversation about Jesus. Be sure to share your experience with your group next week!

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Ruth 1:8-9, 2:8-22, 3:6-13, 4:7-10, John 17:20-24

RELATE

1. What is the most memorable thing someone has ever done for you?
2. Where and when have you felt like a foreigner in a strange land?

RENEW

3. In 1:8, Naomi states a blessing over Orpah and Ruth. What was the kindness (*besed*) that they showed Naomi and her family?
4. Describe a time someone was kind to you during a difficult circumstance. Looking back, can you see God's kindness (*besed*) to you through that person?
5. What did Naomi mean when she said, "May he be blessed by the LORD, whose kindness (*besed*) has not forsaken the living or the dead!" (v. 20)? Whose kindness (*besed*) is she referring to?
6. Boaz says in 3:10, "You have made this last kindness (*besed*) greater than the first..." What was Ruth's first kindness (*besed*)? Why is this one greater?

7. Boaz was Ruth's kinsman redeemer, a close relative that married her. How is Jesus our kinsman redeemer?
8. As believers, if we are to be *one* as the Father and the Son are *one*, how will that lead to kindness toward others? How will people believe God sent Jesus by seeing your life?
9. We show kindness (*besed*) to others out of the overflow of the kindness God has shown us. What are some kindnesses God has shown you?
10. Scholars say an aspect of *besed* as it is used in the book of Ruth can be understood as someone helping another when that person is unable to help themselves. How does this point toward the Gospel?

REACH

11. In the book of Ruth, God's kindness was shown to the people through each other. Who is one person who does not know Jesus that you can show kindness to this week? How? Brainstorm as a group how that act can lead to a conversation about Jesus.
12. Spend time praying together for the people you will show kindness to this week, and for the easy-to-start conversations about Jesus that can result. Be ready to share with your group about the experience.

TEACHING NOTES





WEEK FOUR

1 Kings 8

BACKGROUND

David has it in his heart to build a temple for the Lord where His presence can dwell and people will gather for worship. The Lord tells David he will not be the one to build a temple, but He will allow his son Solomon to build it. Solomon builds the most beautiful structure the Near East had ever seen. Here, the Jewish people would celebrate God's goodness, sacrifice for His glory, and recognize His presence. The Temple was completed about 950 BC. As we come to 1 Kings 8, the temple is complete, and Solomon calls all Israel together to dedicate the building. The largest ceremony surrounds the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant (representing God's presence) and placing it in the Holy of Holies (inner room) as God fills the temple with a cloud that symbolizes His presence. Solomon blesses the people and prays for their future. Throughout this passage, Solomon recognizes that the Lord is too great to be contained by a building, and yet He chooses to dwell among His people.

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for being the faithful Promise Keeper even when I am not. Thank You for showing Yourself as worthy to trust because what You say, You do. Lord, help me recognize when You have spoken so that I can follow. Let me not make up in my own mind words that You have not said. Keep me from casting You in my image, but mold me into the likeness of Your Son. I want to be faithful to who You are and what You have called me to do. Allow me to experience Your joy by delighting in the fulfillment of Your good will. Make me into a promise keeper. Allow my “yes” to be “yes” and my “no” to be “no”. Allow me to be a person of integrity that follows You all my life. Give me the strength and the power to keep Your covenant of love.

GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Kings 8:31-53. There are at least seven parts of Solomon’s prayer in this section. Note what he prays about in each. Why is this significant?

DAY 1:

Read 1 Kings 8:10-21

1. What did the cloud represent for all those present? (cf. Exodus 19:9, 20:21; Leviticus 16:2)
2. Solomon uses human characteristics (anthropomorphism) to illustrate God fulfilling His promises. Why does he do this? How are we like God in this sense? How is God utterly unique?
3. Read v. 16 closely. What has the Lord chosen? What does the Temple represent to the people He has chosen?

4. David was not allowed to build the temple (2 Samuel 7:12-15; 1 Chronicles 22:8, 28:3). What reputation would the Lord have if He HAD allowed David to build it? By not allowing it, how does that maintain God's uniqueness compared with other gods worshipped at the time?
5. Who is the focus of this passage? What has He done?

Call out: יהוה name

The *name* of God expresses His attributes, character, presence, faithfulness, everything we know of the Lord. His personal name of YHWH (pronounced Yahweh), signifies His closeness and approachability to His people. This is the *Name* above all *names*, the great I AM. There is no other being above or greater than Him. The *Name*, found five times in 1 Kings 8:12-21, is shorthand for expressing the significance and magnitude of who He is, the great Promise Keeper.

DAY 2:

Read 1 Kings 8:22-30

1. How is the God of Israel unlike any other being (v. 23)?
2. In verse 23, what does Solomon mean by “walk before you” (ESV) or “your way” (NIV)? What does walking with the Lord mean for us today?
3. Solomon is begging the Lord for something specific. What is it? How does this resonate with your heart (vv. 29-30)?

4. Solomon says even the heavens cannot contain God. Do you live with the awareness of this reality? How would it change your day-to-day life if you did?
5. The fact that the Lord is a promise keeper or covenant keeper (*beseḏ*) means that what He says will happen. How does this bring you comfort? Do you have any concerns over this?

Call out: דָּבַר (*dabar*) to declare or speak

Dabar is both a noun and a verb. In its verb form, it means to speak, to declare, basically to talk, but more substantial than just a verbal utterance. It is more like an oath or a promise, a declaration of something that is bound to happen. As a noun, it carries the same connotations as the root word, but it is a foregone conclusion. If the Lord says it, it is as if it has already happened. *Dabar* is that fact. In 1 Kings 8:24-26, we see the covenant love (*beseḏ*) of the Lord being fulfilled through His promises (*dabar*).

DAY 3:

Read 1 Kings 8:54-61

1. How does your posture affect your prayer life? Do you ever kneel or stand or prostrate yourself to better submit your heart? (See v. 54)
2. What amount of confidence does it give you to know that God is with us and will never leave us (v. 57 and Hebrews 13:5)? What feelings does it evoke?
3. Since no word has failed, what promises from the Scriptures can you claim today for support? Which ones give you hope? Which ones did Solomon highlight?

4. What does it mean for our hearts to be fully committed to the Lord (v. 61)? How can we live by His decrees without becoming legalistic?

5. How will the answer to the prayers Solomon offers help all the people of the earth know the Lord (v. 60)?

JOURNAL PROMPT

What promises from the Lord can you claim? Write out all the ways the Lord has shown Himself as faithful in your life. Weave Scripture where you can demonstrate how His Word and your life have been a testimony to His faithfulness. How can this become a memorial to God's faithfulness? When can you return to this list to remind yourself of the Lord's work in your life?

DAY 4:

Read Philippians 2:5-13

1. What does Christ's humility mean to you?
2. How does this passage reveal God as a promise keeper (Lord of *Hesed*)?
3. Does Jesus' dual nature (fully God/fully man) help us understand how the Jews viewed the Temple?
4. How does this passage build upon "the Name" found in 1 Kings 8? (See the **call out** for *Dabar* on page 57.)

5. What examples does this passage call us to emulate? Which ones are beyond our ability?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

Chuck Colson was Counsel to President Richard Nixon beginning in 1969, and was the first to plead guilty among those involved in the Watergate Scandal. After working diligently on Nixon's campaign, he went back to his law firm feeling empty. In the period of time between then and the Watergate investigation, Colson quietly surrendered his life to Christ. At this time, he was already well known as the "Hatchet Man" and had felt the weight of his sin after reading a chapter from *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis. After testifying 44 times under oath, Chuck took something he hadn't yet been charged with and told the prosecutors, "No deals, no bargains. I'll plead guilty and I want to put this all behind me". In 1974, he was sentenced to seven months in prison and witnessed firsthand what prison did to a man's soul. He grew to love the other inmates and started a Bible study with them. After his incarceration, he recognized God had him in prison for a purpose. Chuck felt led to honor a promise he made to remember his fellow prisoners and their families, and started the Prison Fellowship ministry in 1976. The ministry is now one of the largest non-profits that serves prisoners and their families, and is an advocate for criminal justice reform.⁴ God shared His faithful love (*hesed*) to Chuck and Chuck kept his promises, extending *hesed* to others.

⁴https://youtu.be/r_OqvFJhDRY and <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/about/chuck-colson/>

DAY 5:

Read Ephesians 1:3-23

1. Take time to praise Him for His blessings. Considering this passage, make a list of the gifts He has given you.

2. What does God's forethought about you communicate to you (v. 4)? Note the different ways He has planned and purposed your life.

3. At the moment you placed your trust in Christ, you were sealed (v. 13). What does that mean?

4. How do vv. 13-14 relate to the Temple dedication? How does it illuminate the word *hesed* (covenant love)?

5. The Holy Spirit is not the last gift, but the first. What other gifts does Paul point to in this passage? How does this help you invite people into conversations about Jesus?

GOING DEEPER

Read the following verses: Matthew 28:20; John 10:28, 15:4, 17:23; Romans 8:35-39. What does this say about your relationship with Jesus? How does this give you confidence for today and hope for tomorrow?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read 1 Kings 8:22-24, 27-30

1 Kings 8:22-24: ²² Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven, ²³ and said, “O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love (*beseed*) to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; ²⁴ you have kept with your servant David my father what you declared to him. You spoke with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day.”

RELATE

1. How many times have you moved? What is your favorite place to live?
2. Who do you count on? Who has proven themselves as a faithful friend?

RENEW

3. Where do you go to truly connect with the Lord? When was the last time you did this? How is He faithful even when you are not (*beseed*)?
4. How do you memorialize significant moments in your life?
5. How are you doing in keeping your promises? What does it mean to you that the Lord always keeps His promises?
6. Verses 27-30, among others, show Solomon crying out, begging to be heard. When was the last time you were in this state? Can we get there emotionally, even during celebration?
7. The Lord chooses people, but uses places. How does this resonate with you? What questions does it raise? Has this been true in your life?
8. How does this passage inspire you to pray? What can be modeled in your own life?

9. What does it mean for our hearts to be fully committed to the Lord? What is currently entangling you and keeping you from doing this?
10. What are you doing to pass on the legacy of the Lord to the next generation?

REACH

11. How would being a person of integrity help you invite others into conversations about Jesus?
12. How can you best communicate God's faithfulness to an unbeliever?



TEACHING NOTES





WEEK FIVE

Psalm 51

BACKGROUND

This Psalm grows out of the events that take place in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. When David should have been at war, he was on the roof of his palace. He was at the wrong place, doing the wrong thing, for the wrong reasons. His adulterous desires led him to take another man's wife and, eventually, his life. He then tries to cover up these sins by taking the wife as his own and raising the child as if adopted. After a year of hiding his sin, Nathan comes to expose David's heart and calls him to repentance. This is when the Psalm is written. Unfortunately, the consequences of the sin still remain, and the child dies. Psalm 51 is a permanent reminder to repent early. By doing so, the tumultuous time of guilt, shame, and hiding can be shortened, and healing can begin. If you find yourself in a season where you are secretly crying out in pain as David did publically, please first share it with the group and then with someone on staff. We want to walk with you in experiencing God's healing over your hiding.

JOURNAL PROMPT

Read all of Psalm 51. How does this Psalm help you *marvel at God's infinitely complex love*? How does it reveal His character in a new way? What does this Psalm help remind you of when you are in trouble? List all of the attributes of the Lord that could refresh your soul and create in you a renewed spirit.

DAY 2:

Read Psalm 51:5-12

1. In verse 8, David talks of his bones being crushed. What do you imagine he is experiencing? What is the source of his pain?
2. Look at the verbs David uses in this section (restore, cleanse, create, etc.). What do these verbs tell us about God? What objects are receiving the actions?
3. David uses the imagery of cleansing, not necessarily removal. Why? What is the difference?

4. In David's darkest moments, he calls for joy, gladness, and rejoicing. How is he able to do this at this time? What message does that send to us?

5. What would a renewed spirit and pure heart look like? Are you in need of this now?

GOING DEEPER

Given what David says in verse 17, what is his understanding of forgiveness? Read the verses below and consider how an Old Testament person might approach God for forgiveness.

(Leviticus 16:30; Numbers 14:19-21; Isaiah 1:18, 38:17, 43:25, 44:22, 53:6, 11; Jeremiah 33:8; Ezekiel 36:33; Daniel 9:9; Micah 7:18-19)

DAY 3:

Read Psalm 51:13-19

1. From these verses, what pleases the Lord?
2. Are you in a place where praise and songs about the Lord's righteousness flow from your lips? Or do you need to turn back to Him?
3. Who is responsible for creating a broken spirit and a contrite heart? How do you do this?

4. What do Zion and Jerusalem represent to those singing this Psalm?

5. What do you need to sacrifice to more fully worship the Lord?

PRAYER

This Psalm is a prayer. Rewrite it in your own language and then pray it several times this week.

DAY 4:

Read Romans 5:1-11

1. We are called to rejoice in the hope of His glory and our sufferings. How does this passage tie these two concepts together?
2. Have you admitted your powerlessness and limits? Why is this an essential aspect of the Gospel?
3. What is Christ's sacrifice based on?

4. What did we gain from the gift of salvation through faith?

5. How does this passage relate to the idea of *besed* in Psalm 51:1?

JOURNAL PROMPT

What is one of the darkest times in your journey with the Lord? Was this self-inflicted, out of your control, or a combination? What lessons do you need to take out of those times (write them here)? How did the Lord restore you during or after this season? How did you/do you feel about your sin? How could writing this journal help you keep a broken spirit and contrite heart?

4. What does this Psalm reveal about yourself?

5. How does this Psalm help your heart connect to the heart of God and invite people into conversations about Jesus?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

Melissa didn't grow up a Christian. She only had a concept of what God considers "good" and "bad." She believed she wasn't good enough and spent her entire childhood trying to be someone else. In high school, she fell in love with a guy who started to abuse her and vowed she would never love again. She strived to be beautiful and famous, which led her to an eating disorder and alcoholism. She became a model overnight, was all over magazines and posters, and began dating famous athletes. Her career took off, and she became what the world would call "successful." It was when she was later approached by Playboy that she realized the sin she was living in. She found a church that had a young adult's retreat, and her life was changed. She put her identity in Christ, and God redeemed her story. She left the modeling industry and moved to Kansas City to be a missionary. She is now married and uses social media to share God's Word with the world and help others in their walk with Christ.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read Psalm 51

RELATE

1. This is one of the most well-known Psalms. Which verses speak to you the most?
2. Where are you desperately dependent right now? When have you experienced unexpected joy?

RENEW

3. Is there a point in your life where you were so desperately dependent that you cried out for mercy or the removal of something from your life? How did that situation resolve?
4. Have you ever felt overwhelmed with guilt or shame? What is the difference? How did it abate?
5. Where have you seen God's unfailing love and great compassion? Be specific.
6. What attributes of God are clear from this Psalm? How does that impact what you talk about with others?
7. What challenging situations have you been through that you learned from? How did it equip you for the benefit of others?
8. How do you guard yourself against sin (specifically sexual sin)?
9. What is keeping you from fully worshiping the Lord? Are you willing to sacrifice that for Him?
10. What do you want to see the Lord do that only He can do?

REACH

11. Who is hurting that needs reconciliation? How can you invite that person into a conversation about Jesus?

12. Do you need to seek God's healing over your hiding? Is there anything you need to confess in this safe place?

TEACHING NOTES



WEEK SIX

Lamentations 3

BACKGROUND

God sent prophets to Israel over and over, warning them to turn from their sin and follow Him. Jeremiah was one such prophet. In 586 BC, Jerusalem fell to Babylon, exiles were deported, and the Temple—the place where God dwelled with His people—was destroyed. Many scholars believe Jeremiah wrote *Lamentations* as he mourned over the destruction of his beloved city.

GOING DEEPER

Read all of *Lamentations* in one sitting. Draw pictures representing the themes you see throughout the book.

DAY 1:

Read Lamentations 3

Call out: אֵיךְ (*êkâh*) How!

Ekab is a cry of lament or despair. It is used in Lamentations 1:1, 2:1, and 4:1, emphasizing the suffering of Jerusalem. The book gets its name (Lamentations) from *ekab*.

1. What is the overall tone of the chapter? Is it the same throughout or does it change? If so, where?
2. In vv. 1-18, the author describes the affliction he has endured under God's wrath. Did God cause all of this? Explain your answer.
3. In the NIV, v. 15 reads, "He has filled me with bitter herbs and given me gall to drink." What was Jesus offered to drink while on the cross (Matthew 27:34)?

PRAYER

O Holy, loving Father—

We thank You for your faithfulness. When pressures choke our laughter, and rob us of our joy, You rush right to our side with such great hope! When people become distant, and leave an ache of loneliness, You seem to draw more near to fill us with Your love. When our simple plans collide, creating nothing but confusion and complexities, You come with such great wisdom to be our guide through life's discouraging maze. When our hearts or bodies break, and our desperate eyes can see no sign of coming help, You speak to us, and touch us, and shape for us a peace that more than meets our needs.

O Holy, loving Father—

You never leave us or forsake us. We praise You for Your faithfulness. Amen.

—Jack Loo, 1987

Worship His Majesty (Alexandria: Gaither Music Company, 1987)

DAY 2:

Read Lamentations 3:19–40

1. What change does the author experience in v. 21? What causes it? (hint, see vv. 22-24)

2. In v. 22, what never ceases?

Scholars mark this word(s) as the turning point in the book, changing from grief and despair to hope. What is it about this word that evokes hope?

3. What similarities do you see in vv. 31-33 and Exodus 34:6-7? How does this connect you to God's heart?
4. What do verses 37-39 say about God? Does this bring you comfort? Why or why not?
5. Is there an area of your life where you need to trust God in spite of your circumstances? How do verses 22-23 help? Who can you share this with in a conversation about Jesus?

JOURNAL PROMPT

Thomas Chisholm wrote the hymn, "Great Is Thy Faithfulness" in 1923 in response to Lamentations 3:22-23. Look up the lyrics, listen to the song on YouTube, and/or sing the song. Then spend some time recounting and thanking God for the ways He has been faithful to you. Write them down—writing helps solidify the memory!

DAY 3:

Read Lamentations 3:41–66

COMMENTARY

Part of God's *hesed*—his steadfast, faithful, loyal love—is carrying out all aspects of His covenant with Israel. God had warned them 900 years earlier of the consequences for breaking covenant with Him (Deuteronomy 28). He continued to warn them through the prophets. He demonstrated the long-suffering nature of His character by waiting so long to punish them. He did not destroy them, but left a remnant because of *hesed*. Hope sprung in the midst of dire circumstances because God's faithfulness to punishment also meant he would be faithful to bring redemption for repentance (Deuteronomy 30).⁵

1. What did the author urge the people to do in vv. 40-42?

Pray these verses for yourself. Ask the Lord to reveal any unconfessed areas of sin in your life, and repent.

2. What was God's response to the people's sin in vv. 43-48? Is it warranted? Why or why not?

⁵Dyer, C. H. (1985). Lamentations. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1209). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

3. What did Jeremiah do in v. 55? What was God's response v. in 57?

4. In verse 58, Jeremiah says, "...you have _____ my life." The word used here is *gā'al*, the same word used in Ruth. Look this word up in a dictionary and write a definition here:

How have you seen it in your own life?

5. In this chapter, we have seen punishment as part of God's *hesed*, but we have also seen hope because of that same *hesed*. How would you explain that to someone (use Exodus 34:6-7 and Lamentations 3:22-24 to help with your answer.)?

DAY 4:

Read John 14

1. What did Jesus say about Himself in v. 6? About Himself and the Father in v. 7-11? Based on this, what else is Jesus like (see Exodus 34:6-7, Lamentations 3:22-23)?
2. What is the first sentence Jesus says to His disciples in verse 1? Why does He say this (see 13:33, 14:27-28.)? What is about to take place? How is this the ultimate demonstration of *hesed*?
3. What are reasons you obey (i.e., traffic laws, tax codes, civil and moral laws)? How is love a compelling motivator for obedience?

DAY 5:

Read *Lamentations* 3:22-23

²²The *hesed* of the LORD never ceases; his mercies never come to an end;

²³they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (ESV)

1. The NIV translates v. 22 as “Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail.” Knowing Jeremiah is writing in response to the destruction of Israel because of their sin, what does this translation communicate about God? How does it help you respond to God regarding your own sin?

2. Based on these verses and what you know about *hesed*, could the Israelites do anything that would cause the Lord to abandon them forever? Can you? How does that bring you hope?

3. Meditate on these verses, saying them aloud several times. This week, we studied them in the context of the Israelites exile due to their sin. How thankful are you that God is faithful to His justice as well as His redemption?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read *Lamentations* 3:1-9, 15-42, 55-58; *John* 14

RELATE

1. What is your favorite time of the year? Why?
2. Can you share a time you felt despair? Looking back on it, was there anything good during it?

RENEW

3. What is the tone of the Lamentations verses? How does the author describe himself in verse 1?
4. In verse 22, the “steadfast love [*hesed*] never ceases.” Scholars mark *hesed* as the turning point in the book, changing from grief and despair to hope. What is it about this word that evokes hope?
5. What similarities do you see in verses 31-33 and Exodus 34:6-7? How does this connect you to God’s heart?
6. What do verses 37-39 say about God? Does this bring you comfort? Why or why not?
7. Part of God’s *hesed* - His steadfast, faithful, loyal love - is carrying out all aspects of His covenant with Israel, even consequences for sin. How does this aspect of God’s love give you comfort?
8. Lamentations was written in response to Israel’s punishment for disobeying and breaking covenant with God. In John 14:15, Jesus says, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments.” In your own life, what are reasons you obey (i.e., traffic laws, tax codes, civil and moral laws)? How is love a compelling motivator for obedience?
9. Who does Jesus promise to send in verses 16-17? What else does Jesus promise to give in verse 27? How does this bring you comfort amid your own trials?

10. Meditate on Lamentations 3:22-23, saying these verses aloud several times. What impacts you the most? How thankful are you that God is faithful to His justice as well as redemption?

REACH

11. Where in your life can you see how God used a trial to bring you closer to Him? Think about a way you can share that with someone and make a plan to have that conversation this week.
12. Spend time celebrating conversations about Jesus that your group has had! Pray for upcoming opportunities have easy-to-start conversations this week!

TEACHING NOTES



WEEK SEVEN

Jonah 4:1-11 & John 11:33-35

BACKGROUND

Many of us are familiar with the story of Jonah from early childhood. The fascination with a big fish swallowing a man always grabs the interest of every kid. As adults, what should genuinely pique our interest is the compassionate character of God demonstrated through a story of the unlikely redemption of a wicked people and a rebellious prophet. To recap the story, Jonah is sitting comfortably at home. He is called to preach a message of repentance to the Ninevites. The Ninevites were some of the most wicked people on earth and brutal in their treatment of their enemies. Instead of calling these people to repentance, Jonah rebels, deciding to go the opposite direction to Tarshish. While on the boat, God provides a storm to get Jonah's attention. The men throw him overboard, and God provides a big fish for his protection. God then delivers Jonah to Nineveh to preach the message he was given. Jonah does so. People respond in repentance, and the Lord relents of his wrath. That brings us to chapter 4, where Jonah is throwing a pity party of one. To truly understand what is going on, a Bible Atlas helps in this story.

GOING DEEPER

Sometimes, God unleashes His wrath. Other times, He does not. Look up some of the following verses and note the instances when God relents and what is at stake when He does not.

Exodus 15:7, 22:24, 32:10, 33:5; Leviticus 26:28; Numbers 11:33, 16:21, 45; Deuteronomy 1:34, 3:26, 6:15, 9:7, 9:14, 9:19, 11:17; Joshua 22:18; Judges 2:20, 10:7, Jeremiah 18:1-11

Compare the verses above to these New Testament verses. John 3:36; Romans 2:5; Ephesians 5:6.

DAY 2:

Read Jonah 4:5-8

1. Jonah made a shelter for himself. Was this an adequate shelter? How does this relate to Genesis 3? Compare Genesis 3:7, 21 and Jonah 4:5, 6.

2. Why is the Lord providing something to ease Jonah's discomfort? What does this say about God's *hesed* (abounding love)?

Call out: שִׂמְחָה (*smkh*) rejoice

The intensity of Jonah's anger is ironically mirrored in his abounding joy or great rejoicing (v. 6). His great delight in something so small is revealing. This word is used in association with weddings, feasts, and other festivals, as well as the blessings the Lord bestows on us. Throughout the Psalms and Proverbs, we are called to rejoice. Look up these verses to see what we should rejoice about: Proverbs 10:1, 12:25, 15:20, 27:11, 29:2; Psalm 5:11-12, 9:2-3, 40:16-17, 92:4-5, 104:15.

DAY 3:

Read Jonah 4:9-11

1. God asks Jonah about his rights through the same question twice (v. 4 and v. 9). What is God trying to help Jonah understand?
2. There are several miracles found in this passage, as well as in the rest of the book. Can you list them? What do these tell you about God's power?

DAY 4:

Read John 11:17-44

1. Martha gives a pious answer to Jesus (v. 24). When are these types of faith answers appropriate? When are they not?
2. Martha approaching Jesus (v. 20) and Mary approaching Jesus (v. 32) are described differently, but in the same words. Why does Mary's approach illicit an emotional reaction from Jesus? How do you approach the Lord?
3. Jesus' love is on display here. How is Jesus demonstrating His love in this passage? How does He show love to you?

MODERN ILLUSTRATION

Growing up I was angry at God. I believed he was either heartless or distant, and I wanted nothing to do with Him. My story begins in India, where I contracted polio. The virus spread throughout my body and I became paralyzed. My family eventually moved to Canada to seek better medical care. I had endured 21 major operations throughout my childhood. It was only at age 7 that I was able to walk. My second home was a hospital for crippled children. I lived in a ward with a dozen other girls who only saw our families on weekends during visitors hours. When I wasn't in the hospital, I was at school. After years of being bullied, I learned to keep to myself and put on a front. In high school I started attending Fellowship of Christian Athletes meetings because all the popular kids were there. I sat with a girl in the back who didn't have an interest in being there either, but one weekend she went on a retreat and couldn't stop talking about God when she got back. I decided to give God a chance and started reading the Bible. After reading John 9 and 12, I felt known, understood, and unconditionally loved- God saw right through me. When I was 16 years old I knelt by the side of my bed and committed my life to Christ. Since then I have endured many more trials, but God has given me the gift of His presence. With every heartache, He draws closer, using my weakness to display His strength.⁶

DAY 5:

Read Jonah 4:2

1. Is there such a thing as righteous anger? When do we need to be angry as God's ambassadors?

⁶To read all of her story, go to https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2021/july-august/vaneetha-risner-polio-privilege-punishment-john.html?utm_medium=widgetsocial

5. Describe five attributes of God that have best been demonstrated in your life. Which ones are different than those Jonah lists? Which ones overlap?

JOURNAL PROMPT

As we understand our own story, we will naturally see how it intersects with God's story and others' stories. Life Map your ups and down with the Lord. If you have not done a Life Map before, make a list of your top 5-10 moments using the "5-H" approach (Heritage, Heroes, Hard Times, High Points, and Holy Moments). Here is a short video to help: www.vimeo.com/300541951. Consider how the Lord has shown Himself in different seasons, what you have learned, and how it has changed you. If you have done this before, consider where God's hand was most evident and what you learned from that experience.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Read *Jonah 4*

Jonah 4:2 ²And he prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love (*beseed*), and relenting from disaster. (ESV)

RELATE

1. What makes you angry? Do you find yourself being angry at one specific thing consistently?
2. Who has shown you abounding love in your life?

RENEW

3. Jonah accurately describes God as “abounding in love (*beseed*).” Why doesn’t this declaration connect his heart to God’s heart? How can we ensure that truth is penetrating our own hearts?
4. In verse 2, Jonah prays an angry prayer of self-focus. What is your prayer life like? Are you praying God’s will or praying your will to God?
5. When things happen in our lives and our expectations are not met, it can make us angry or disappointed. When angry with God, do you go to Him and express your anger or turn your back on Him? Why?
6. Has God surprised you with His treatment of you or someone close to you? Explain.
7. How does this passage relate to our value of “God’s mission over our comfort”?
8. Based on Jonah’s reaction after asking for death, he is hoping for something. What does Jonah hope happens after verse 3? Why do you think that? What does this reveal about his heart?

9. Jonah experiences numerous emotions throughout this book. How do your emotions affect your relationship with God? How does it affect your relationships with others?
10. How can we cultivate a heart of compassion (concern) for those far from God? What do we need to do to make this a regular part of our gathering?

REACH

11. How do we take the abounding love, grace, and compassion we have received and extend it to others?
12. Could you take something that has happened in your life and communicate the love, compassion, and grace of the Lord in two minutes or less? Can we hear it?

TEACHING NOTES



THANK YOU

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In Christ,

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