

YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL

June 18, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

Who was the teacher with the reputation for being “mean” at your elementary school? What legends gave them this reputation?

Sometimes we can think of God like our middle school vice-principal: watching and waiting to spot any infraction and then bust us when we mess up. We need a bigger view of God that remembers His kindness and compassion, His mercy and grace. In response to our sin – our inability to live without messing up – God sent His Son to rescue and save us; it’s His kindness that leads us back to Him (Romans 2:4).

What feelings have you had toward the type of authority figure who seems to only be looking for your mistakes (like school administrators or teachers, coaches, bosses, or other authorities)?

- How did those feelings affect your interactions with those authorities?
- What words would you use to characterize your interactions with them?

READ Exodus 15:22-27 and 17:1-7

The plagues and miraculous sea crossing – both spectacular revelations of God’s power and glory, come just before these stories.

How would you describe the Israelites attitudes and behaviors in these stories?

- What do their actions and words reveal that they *functionally* believe about God? In other words, how do they seem to expect God to act?
- What other responses could the Israelites have had? In other words, what could be a faithful response to both their lack and God’s provision?

How would you describe God’s response to their distrust, grumbling and accusations?

- Is this how you expect God to act?
- What does this show you about the character of God?

READ Psalm 103:7-18

Read this psalm together slowly. What stands out to you?

- What truths about God do you see in this passage? There’s a lot here! Give yourselves time to sit in these verses and explore.
 - How do these truths broaden your picture of who God is and what He is like?
- If you lived like this is true, how would it change the way that you pray?
 - How would it change your response to your sin?
- How does Psalm 103:10 push back the idea that God is just waiting to punish us when we mess up?

READ 1 John 1:8-2:2

How do these verses add to your understanding of God’s view of us and desires for us when we sin?

- What do you see in these verses that helps to explain *how* God can forgive our sin?
- What would it look like to incorporate a practice of confession into your life (or how do you practice confession)? Brainstorm and share ideas about how you could live out the truth in these verses.

FROM THE MESSAGE

DAILY TIME

Exodus 5
Exodus 6
Exodus 7
Exodus 8
Psalm 103

Deuteronomy 4:32-40

As you read each day, consider:

- What do these passages show me about God and His character?
- How is God different than you thought, or unexpected in these verses?
- How can I ask God for help based on these verses?
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Brunch Bunch!

June 25, Fulton Heights

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NOTES AND QUOTES

These two stories in Exodus take place just after God has not only brought the Israelites out of Egypt, but miraculously through the Red Sea to safety.

When have you forgotten God’s goodness in a time of acute need?

Deuteronomy 8:14 then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery,¹⁵ who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, ¹⁶who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. ¹⁷Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Though we may sometimes view God as a Judge-on-High, waiting to hand out punishments for our infractions, the story of the Father and sons in Luke 15:11-32 demonstrates God's compassion and Fatherly love as He runs to us with grace and forgiveness.

How was your perspective on God reshaped through this message?

Are you perhaps in a season of "squandering" like the younger son (Luke 15:14), whether it's your time, your attention, your relationships, etc?

- How does it change your perspective on that squandering to consider the father's response in this passage?

Dirk said that "Holiness is not something God wants *from* us; it's something God wants *for* us." Discuss together what that means practically. Why does God want holiness for us?

EXTRA Read Hebrews 12:1-11

Although God is not just a policeman out to punish us for our disobedience, how do these verses create a balanced picture of our Heavenly Father when it comes to sin?

- Can you think of any examples of narratives in the Bible that highlight the truth here?
- When have you personally experienced the truth of these verses?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Spend time in prayer for one another; also ask Him to expand your view of Him, that you might know and love Him more deeply!

PRAYER AND CARE

Reminders for the week ahead:

Exodus 15:22 Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. *23* When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. *24* And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" *25* And he cried to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet.

There the Lord made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, 26 saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, your healer."
27 Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve springs of water and seventy palm trees, and they encamped there by the water.

Exodus 17: 1 All the congregation of the people of Israel moved on from the wilderness of Sin by stages, according to the commandment of the Lord, and camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. *2* Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." And Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" *3* But the people thirsted there for water, and the people grumbled against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?" *4* So Moses cried to the Lord, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." *5* And the Lord said to Moses, "Pass on before the people, taking with you some of the elders of Israel, and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. *6* Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb, and you shall strike the rock, and water shall come out of it, and the people will drink." And Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. *7* And he called the name of the place Massah and Meribah, because of the quarreling of the people of Israel, and because they tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

Psalms 103: 7 He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.

8 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

9 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever.

10 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;

12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

13 As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

14 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

15 As for man, his days are like grass; he flourishes like a flower of the field;

16 for the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place knows it no more.

17 But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear him,

and his righteousness to children's children,

18 to those who keep his covenant and remember to do his commandments.

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. *9* If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *10* If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. *2* He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Hebrews 12:11

For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.