

YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL

June 11, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

What is something you were sad to outgrow?

What was something you looked forward to outgrowing?

Some of us are new to faith and just starting to discover who God is; for others of us, we may have grown overly familiar with God, thinking that what we were able to grasp in the days of Sunday School or VBS is all that there is too God. Whatever the reason, we want our understanding and view of God to reach toward His limitless, infinite, eternal character, and not remain "too small." This week, we'll look at how an inadequate view of God can affect us when we go through valleys and low times of faith.

READ Acts 14

What a roller coaster Paul and Barnabas are on! Each box below represents a verse in Acts 14; place an ↑ in any boxes where the verses represent a high point of their journey, and a ↓ for any representing a low point, a valley.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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Which of these circumstances would have been the hardest for you?

- Which of these experiences would have deepened your faith and trust in God?
 - Are you more or less likely to turn toward God in a difficult time?
- In which experiences would you have had a different reaction than Paul and Barnabas? Which would have caused you to doubt, question or waver in your belief?

How would these experiences *expand* and *deepen* Paul and Barnabas's views of God?

- What aspects of His character did they learn through these personal experiences?
- What experiences in your life have expanded and deepened your view of God?

Paul's knowledge of God and experience of His presence and power developed through formal education, a major conversion experience with Jesus, and a life of service with all its ups and downs (Phil 3:4-7, Acts 9:1-19, 2 Cor23-29). Which of those are a part of your own faith journey?

- Which have been most formative for how you think about God?

READ 2 Corinthians 1:3-11

Explain in your own words how Paul understands his sufferings?

- How does he describe the purpose of his hard times?
- What has he learned about God through his hardships and troubles?

Can you describe a time when you learned to "rely... on God" (verse 9) through a difficult experience? (Perhaps at the time you didn't see it, but in retrospect you can see God's care, provision, comfort, and sustaining grace?)

- What do you see in this passage that helps you think about how to pray and talk to God during difficult seasons and trials?

Focus on verse 10:

- Paul says that God is what they have set their hope on. What lesser things do you sometimes set your hope on during trying times?
 - What does it look like practically to "set our hope" on God?

DAILY TIME

Exodus 1
Exodus 2
Exodus 3
Exodus 4

Psalms 78:1-8, 40-55
Deuteronomy 6:20-25

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?

SIGN UP TO SERVE!

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"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." AW Tozer

What comes into your mind when you think about God?

List the characteristics that you think of when you think of God. Compare them to this (not exhaustive!) [list](#); do you notice any trends or patterns either from what you listed, or what you didn't?

What experiences in your life have formed your thoughts about God?

- Paul sounds confident that God will *continue* to deliver him, suggesting His faithfulness to deliver in the past. Are there any scenes from Acts 14 that don't look like the kind of deliverance you would want? Which ones?
 - What do you think Paul means by "deliver" here?

Although God invites us to seek Him and know Him, we will never fully comprehend Him – and that's a good thing!

33 Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!

34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord,

or who has been his counselor?"

35 "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"

36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Romans 11:33-36

FROM THE MESSAGE

Summary!

Question

- Follow up or clarifying question

Question

- Follow up or clarifying question

EXTRA Consider Psalm 13, a prayer from David.

As you read this psalm, what can you infer that David believed about God, and expected based on his experience and knowledge of God?

- Can you restate this psalm with your own troubles instead of David's? How can you petition God for help, and trust in His loyal love and deliverance?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

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

PRAYER AND CARE

Reminders for the week ahead:

Acts 14:1 Now at Iconium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks believed. *2* But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. *3* So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. *4* But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews and some with the apostles. *5* When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to mistreat them and to stone them, *6* they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country, *7* and there they continued to preach the gospel.

Paul and Barnabas at Lystra

8 Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. *9* He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, *10* said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and began walking. *11* And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!" *12* Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. *13* And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. *14* But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, *15* "Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. *16* In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. *17* Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for

he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness." *18* Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead. *20* But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city, and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. *21* When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, *22* strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. *23* And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Paul and Barnabas Return to Antioch in Syria

24 Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. *25* And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia, *26* and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had fulfilled. *27* And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. *28* And they remained no little time with the disciples.

2 Corinthians 1: 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, *4* who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. *5* For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings,

so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.
⁸For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our

strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again. ¹¹You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.