

GOD IS GREAT AND GOOD

ISAIAH 57:15

*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*

Additional Reading: Jeremiah 10:6; Revelation 4:11; Psalm 106:1; Psalm 119:68
(Optional: Luke 18:19)

In the classic children’s book series, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the reader is often reminded that Aslan is not a tame lion. When the eldest Pevensie girl, Susan, is told that Aslan is a lion, she says, “I’d thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe?” The friendly Mr. Beaver responds, “Safe? . . . who said anything about safe? ‘Course he isn’t safe. But he’s good. He’s the King, I tell you.”

Like Susan, who had misconceptions about Aslan, we often have misconceptions about God. A lot of these misconceptions arise when we downplay either God’s greatness or his goodness. When we talk about God’s greatness, we refer to God’s attributes that belong to God alone—such as infinity and omnipresence. When we talk about God’s goodness, we refer to God’s attributes that humans can also have—such as mercy and kindness. If you focus only on God’s greatness, you may have a hard time believing that he loves you, especially under challenging circumstances. But if you focus only on God’s goodness, you may start to think of him as a “tame lion” who lacks power.

In Isaiah 57, the prophet rebukes the Israelites for their unfaithfulness. Instead of worshiping the one true God, they’ve turned to the powerless gods of surrounding nations. The people don’t remember their great and good God, for if they did, they could never worship another.

Isaiah had a profound revelation of God’s greatness, often giving him the name, the Holy One of Israel. He reminds the people that God is the All-Mighty who dwells in the high and holy place and inhabits eternity. But Isaiah doesn’t stop there. He then reminds the people that the Lord is the one who is with the lowly in spirit. Not only is he a great God, awesome and holy, but he is good, reviving those who come to him in humility and repentance. Surely a God such as this is worthy of all of our worship.

But so often, we're like the Israelites. We forget how awesome our great and good God is. We allow other people, objects, ideas, goals, dreams—the list goes on and on—to steal the worship only he deserves. This week, we will be exploring the attributes of God in two categories: his greatness and goodness. In considering his greatness, we'll learn that he is transcendent, unchanging, and sovereign. In looking at his goodness, we'll examine how God is just, long-suffering, and kind. As we meditate on God's greatness and goodness this week, may the Holy Spirit reveal our misconceptions and hidden idols, that we may redirect all of our worship to the only one who is worthy.

BECAUSE GOD IS GREAT AND GOOD, HE IS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP.

Reflect

Which aspect of God's character is harder for you to believe—his greatness or his goodness? Why do you think that is?

List all the reasons you believe God is worthy of your worship.

DAY 1: GOD IS TRANSCENDENT

EXODUS 15:11

“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?”

Additional Reading: Deuteronomy 3:24; 2 Samuel 7:22; Ephesians 4:4–6; Hebrews 1:3

Table Mountain in Cape Town, South Africa, is one of the most iconic mountains in the world. While Table Mountain is beautiful from below, the views from the top are even more breathtaking—Lion’s Head, Camp’s Bay, the Twelve Apostles. There’s nothing like standing on a mountain peak, looking down at the world around you. But at some point, we all have to leave the mountain peak and make the long trek back down to reality.

Thankfully, the same is not true for our awesome God. As Creator, God is transcendent. That means that he is distinct from everything else in creation, surpassing the laws of nature. He dwells in the high and holy place, and there is no one and nothing in the world like him. He exercises control and authority in all of creation.

In Exodus 15, Moses and the people of Israel lift a song of praise to the Lord after he miraculously parted the Red Sea and delivered them from the hands of Pharaoh. After seeing God’s transcendent power on full display, they sing, “Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?” In defeating the Egyptians, the Lord also showed that he was mightier than the Egyptians’ gods. There is no obstacle or opposition too big for our awesome God! Today you maybe faced with obstacles and opposition to your faith. You may be praying for the salvation of a loved one, for healing for you or someone close to you, or financial help. Or you may be dealing with trials, temptations, and testing of your faith. Be encouraged the Transcendent God is with you.

Reflect

Are you currently facing an obstacle or opposition to your faith? What is it?

How does knowing God is transcendent increase your faith?

DAY 2: GOD IS UNCHANGING

HEBREWS 6:17

“So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.”

Additional Reading: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:25–27; Hebrews 13:8; James 1:17

Duct tape was developed during World War II as a waterproof, rubber-based adhesive. Since then, duct tape has garnered a reputation for its durability. It's such a durable material that it's now commonly used by DIY crafters to make anything from formal dresses to canoes. In the 2015 movie, *The Martian*, Matt Damon's character even uses duct tape for repairs on Mars! Duct tape has its reputation because of its constancy and reliability. Its makers promise us that it is waterproof and durable, and they deliver—every time.

Today, we're exploring God's unchangeability—his constancy. God's unchangeability refers to the fact that his character and eternal purposes don't change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is constant and reliable. This fact is very comforting in a world full of change and uncertainty. Because God doesn't change, he can be trusted and relied upon absolutely.

The author of Hebrews says that when God desired to show the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath. The author goes on to say that part of God's unchanging nature is that it's impossible for him to lie. Not only can we trust him absolutely, but we can also trust his Word. If God said it, he will do it. If he promised it, it will come to pass.

While the Bible makes it clear that God's character and purposes are constant, we also see that God responds to our actions, such as our prayers and our faith. But this doesn't put the pressure on us, as if we need to pray just the right way or muster up enough faith from our willpower. Instead, a robust faith is possible because of the constancy of God's character and the trustworthiness of his Word. Pray with confidence this week, knowing that God's response will be based on his unchanging character and eternal purpose.

Reflect

How does trusting in God's unchanging character and Word help you to have a robust faith?

How will knowing that God will respond to you based on his unchanging character and eternal purpose impact the way you pray?

DAY 3: GOD IS SOVEREIGN

JOB 42:2

“I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”

Additional Reading: Genesis 50:19–20; Daniel 4:34–35; Romans 8:28

If you're a parent, you've probably had to tell your child to stay away from the stove or fire. If you have a curious child, they probably asked you why. You try to explain, but they don't understand your reasoning. Eventually, you resort to, "Because I said so."

The book of Job follows the story of a righteous man's attempts to grapple with his intense and seemingly senseless suffering. Finally, in chapter 38, God shows up and speaks to Job. But he doesn't offer words of comfort or answers to his questions like we might imagine. Instead, Job gets the equivalent of a parent's "because I said so" when God says, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

Job humbles himself and acknowledges God's sovereignty, proclaiming that he can do all things and that his purposes can't be hindered. He understands that the Lord is the sovereign King of creation. Job then says in Job 42:2–3: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know." In God's sovereignty, Job's trials were meant to purify his faith and produce endurance in his character. God remained compassionate, merciful, and in control through the suffering. After seeking comfort and answers for forty-two chapters, Job finds the real source of comfort—not in having his questions answered, but in repenting for his doubts and trusting the Lord. Trusting in the Lord's sovereignty is much easier said than done, especially when we are experiencing our own trials and pain. How can we trust that God has our best interest in mind in the middle of difficult circumstances? We can look to Jesus, the innocent sufferer, who suffered and died to save us. In the middle of overwhelming pain and sorrow, when God's ways don't make sense to us, we can look to the cross and be comforted that our sovereign God saw fit to send his Son to die that we might be saved.

Reflect

What trial are you currently facing? How can trusting in God's sovereignty bring you comfort?

How does looking to the cross assure you that God always has your best interest in mind?

DAY 4: GOD IS JUST

DEUTERONOMY 32:4

“The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.”

Additional Reading: Genesis 18:25; Romans 3:26; Revelation 15:3

The mimic octopus, first discovered off the coast of Indonesia in 1998, is a master of disguise. This tricky sea creature can change its shape, color, and movements to impersonate up to fifteen different predators. In today's devotional, we start looking at God's attributes of goodness. These are his attributes that we, as his people, are called to imitate. But unlike the mimic octopus, whose mimicry is only skin deep, our imitation must begin in the heart. Our awesome God is righteous, meaning he is right in all he does and is the very standard of what is considered right and good. As a good God, he holds us to these same standards, punishing evil and rewarding good. When you think of God's justice, you may only think of his punishment toward the wicked, such as the destruction of Sodom in Genesis 19. But we should also think of God's defense of the widow and the orphan. Because he is just, he takes up the cause of the righteous and is the defender of the one treated unjustly. He is a good judge, fair in all his dealings, the defender of the defenseless, and the rewarder of the righteous. Trusting in God's justice can be challenging in a world full of so much injustice. If God is just, why do evil men prosper? Why do the righteous suffer? Why does injustice seem to prevail? But when these questions plague us, we can look to Jesus. He is the perfectly righteous One who suffered unjustly that we may be justified, or made righteous in God's sight. In the here and now, justice will often be incomplete. But that will not always be the case. When Jesus returns and brings the fullness of his kingdom, every wrong will be made right. Until then, we're called to stand for what is right, be fair in all of our dealings, and defend those in our communities who suffer unjustly.

Reflect

Why is it necessary for a good God to be just? How does this attribute of God help you to understand what Jesus did for you on the cross?

What does it look like for you to be just in all your relationships?

DAY 5: GOD IS LONG-SUFFERING

2 PETER 3:9

“The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

When we think of the term “long-suffering,” we usually simplify it to the word “patient.” We think that God’s patience is much like our own and that he is simply waiting. But long-suffering means so much more than patience—it means that God is slow to anger. On the other side of his patience is wrath.

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of Israel recount time and time again that the Lord is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. They recognized just how deep sin is buried in the human heart yet how God perseveres in his goodness and love. The Israelites bounced back and forth between worshiping God and falling away from him. They saw firsthand just how slow he was to anger. His long-suffering nature does not last forever, but he endures longer than we can imagine.

We learn in 2 Peter 3 that God’s promise of judgment and redemption will certainly come to pass. Even within that promise, he does not wish that anyone would suffer the fullness of his anger. God is just and merciful at the same time. As believers, we have benefited from God’s undeserved goodness that leads us to salvation and through life transformation. He gives us the promise of the new heavens and the new earth.

We believers should not forget that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). He has been long-suffering for our sake and continues to endure for nonbelievers. While others who don’t know Christ are still in their sin, we are called to bring the gospel hope to them. Repentance and forgiveness are gifts for everyone all over the world no matter their past or current situations. It’s not our job to save others, but it is a privilege to share the truth of God’s hope with them.

When we grasp what it means for God to be long-suffering, it changes how we approach non-Christians. We learn to persevere in those relationships as we generously share our faith and love.

Reflect

What specific things in your life has God been long-suffering toward? How have you responded?

What would it look like for you to be long-suffering? How would that impact your relationships?

DAY 6: GOD IS KIND

EPHESIANS 2:7

“... so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

In the trilogy, *Lord of the Rings*, many characters stand out for their selfless deeds. But none so much as Samwise Gamgee, the humble and loyal Hobbit who follows Frodo into danger and certain death, helping his friend carry the heavy burden of the One Ring and accomplish his mission of destroying it. As they near the end of their journey, Samwise goes without water so that Frodo will have enough. And as Samwise lay sleeplessly one night, he says to himself, “I’ll get there, if I leave everything but my bones behind. And I’ll carry Mr. Frodo up myself, if it breaks my back and heart.” And that’s precisely what Samwise did, carrying Frodo when he had no more strength to walk. Samwise was a genuinely kind and selfless friend.

The same is true of God and his relationship with us. God’s love for us is kind. When we talk about God’s kindness, we’re referring to his benevolent concern for those he loves. What’s so amazing about his kindness is that it’s freely given, not earned or deserved. In fact, the Bible teaches us that God shows his loving-kindness to those who don’t deserve it! God set his loving-kindness upon Israel, though they were insignificant among the nations (Deuteronomy 7:7–8). He then led the Israelites with loving-kindness, despite their consistent unfaithfulness (Hosea 11:4). And because of his loving-kindness, while we were still sinners, he died for us (Romans 5:8). Because God loves us, he gives of himself, not for what he can gain, but for what we gain. Despite our sin and unfaithfulness, God sent his Son to die for us so that we could be reconciled to him—so that we could have a relationship with this great and good God. We have done nothing to deserve this, but out of the overflow of his kindness, we have become the recipients of his grace. And for all eternity, the immeasurable riches of God’s grace will be on full display for us to marvel at as we bask in his benevolent kindness toward us.

Reflect

Romans 2:4 says that “God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance.” Has God revealed anything in your life that you need to repent of? How does God’s kindness help you to repent and trust in him?

Does selfless kindness characterise your relationships? What would it look like for you to be kind in your relationships? How does the revelation of God’s kindness to us help you to express that kindness in your relationships with others?

DAY 7: GOD IS HOLY

ISAIAH 6:3

“Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.”

Additional Reading: 1 Peter 1:14-16, Revelation 15:4, Romans 12:1-2

Holiness is not only one characteristic out of the many attributes of God – it is the character of God Himself. He is unique, incomparable, matchless, without parallel or peer. He is transcendentally separate, in a class by Himself. He is subject to nothing. He answers to no one. God’s holiness determines all that He is and all that He does. It speaks of His absolute purity and that He is the Creator. He is not creation. God alone is holy. The very word ‘holy’ means to be separate or to cut, to be different.

The prophet Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. The Scripture says that the seraphim, six-winged creatures that were standing above the Lord, called to one another with this resounding refrain, spoken day and night, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts!” This is the only instance in the Word of God where a description of who He is, is used three times in a row. So blazing is God’s holiness that the seraphim who serve Him in heaven cover their faces and feet with their wings. That’s how intense it is to be in the presence of a holy God. S. Charnock said, “As there is no darkness in His understanding, so there is no spot in His will; as His mind is possessed with all truth, so there is no deviation in His will from it. He loves all truth and goodness. He hates all falsity and evil.” Even the foundations of the thresholds shook in the manifest presence of God (Isaiah 6:4). The first thing Isaiah does when he sees the holiness of God is to cry out, “Woe is me! I am undone, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” A prophet’s job was to speak to the people on behalf of God. In this chapter, Isaiah sees the person he is and who God is. He sees how sinful he is compared to the absolute holiness of God. Isaiah is undone; he is grieved by his life. But God doesn’t leave him like that. He commands one of the seraphim to fly to Isaiah with a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar and to touch Isaiah’s lips, saying “Behold your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for” (Isaiah 6:7). You see, our sin was put on Christ and His holiness clothes us. We stand before Christ in a righteousness that’s not our own. We stand forgiven, accepted and granted sonship with all its privileges.

Reflect

Do you see God as a holy God and for who He really is?

What is the evidence in your daily life that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? Do your behaviour, habits, choices and language show that you are “a holy people, a royal priesthood, a chosen nation, a people for His possession” (1 Peter 2:9)?

DAY 8: GOD IS FAITHFUL

DEUTERONOMY 7:9

“Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations.”

This verse describes our God as the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. Covenants are forever - our God is revealed as the One who keeps His Word and His commitments. In this case, His commitment is to us for a thousand generations. It's not as if after a thousand generations He would stop loving us, as this is poetic language that really means 'forever and ever and ever, amen'. No, His covenant endures and stands forever strong. There are very few things that are forever, but our covenant with God is rock solid eternal.

His covenant is one of steadfast love, to do good to us, to bless us with relationship with Him and with purpose and meaning in life. His covenant is one of passionate love, which means that He is for us and wants to help us become all that we are meant to be.

I love my wife and want only the best for her. How much more is God's heart one of deep love.

Moses, the speaker here, wants us to really, really know this. The word he uses for 'know' is 'yada', which means 'to know like a man and woman know each other, intimately'. It's seen in Genesis 4:1: "And Adam knew his wife; and she conceived".

It's a deep, intimate, experiential knowing that we are invited into with God - to deeply know that He is God, the faithful God, the covenant-keeping God, who is true to His covenant promises to His people. To know means to experience, to enjoy and to fully grasp that God is faithful. This requires time. It requires intentionality and a willing, desiring heart ("Those who hunger will eat"). Don't lose heart. Keep pressing into God, desiring to know Him this way. Keep praying, worshipping, seeking, fasting and you will know Him this way.

The Hebrew root word for 'faithful' includes the idea of confirmation or proof. Just like a bank guarantee that enables you to purchase a house, God's faithfulness can be banked on. This brings me to my confession. The part that says "keeps covenant... with those who love Him and keep His commandments" would unease me. It would make me question if I am loving and if I am keeping my promises. I realise now that the entire theme of this passage is God's faithfulness to us, not my faithfulness to Him. He is faithful and He is God.

Reflect

How has God been faithful to me in the past season?

How can I rest more in His faithfulness?

DAY 9: GOD IS MERCIFUL

LAMENTATIONS 3:22-23

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

The most remarkable thing about mercy is that it is always, completely and utterly undeserved.

If we could earn or win mercy, it would be a prize or a reward. If we could work hard to acquire mercy, it would only be remuneration for the best effort we could possibly make by ourselves. Mercy is something that is granted by One greater than ourselves for no other reason than that He chooses to grant it. God is merciful. As Ephesians 2:4 says, He is rich in mercy. It is Who He is and how He chooses to deal with us in Christ Jesus.

Prizes, rewards and remunerations are all temporal. They run out and are non-renewable.

But the promise that the prophet Jeremiah makes to us is that God’s mercy never ever ceases. Every single morning of our lives, no matter what happened the day before, God is there - the second we open our eyes – choosing to show us mercy so that we can live the life He has called us to live in Jesus.

The Hebrew word translated as ‘mercies’ in Lamentations 3:22 is *‘cheched’*, which is rooted in a word that means kindness. Mercy is literally God’s unmerited, undeserved favour lavished on us. Mercy is how He chooses to show us His loving kindness. God does not want us to strive for worthiness. As Titus 3:5 says, “He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit”. God wants us to trust that His faithfulness truly is great. To trust that His mercy is freely available to all those who trust in Him, no matter what we believe about ourselves, no matter what we have done or where we have been. To trust that His mercy can restore us back to His love and His grace. Today, when you woke up, it was a new morning! And what that means is that God’s mercy, His loving kindness and unmerited favour, was renewed for you today. Why don’t you push into that and receive all of it with great joy, humility and thanksgiving?

Reflect

Can you think of any instances where you have tried to make yourself worthy of God’s mercy? How did that make you feel? Did striving like that bring you closer to or further from God?

What do you think keeps you from receiving the fullness of God’s mercy, of His unmerited favour? Can you find Scriptures that might help you with that?

DAY 10: GOD IS WISE

LUKE 2:52

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and man.”

That God is all wise and that His knowledge is unfathomable is widely accepted and understood in the Body of Christ. This is why the reference to Jesus in Luke 2:52 is so intriguing. Even though Jesus is God – even though He was there at the foundation of the world, even though He is all knowing and all wise - the Scripture clearly states that He *grew* in wisdom, in stature and in favour with both God and man.

How does God grow in what He is already perfect in?

We know from Scripture that Jesus was both 100% God and 100% man. It wasn't the God part that required growth. That was already perfect. It was the weak, human form in which He operated for 33 years that needed to learn submission to the Spirit of God. It was Jesus in this human form that grew in wisdom and maturity through this process.

This Scripture is incredibly encouraging for each of us. If Jesus, who is God, took the time to bring His body, mind, will and emotions under the authority of His Spirit and was successful in growing in wisdom, stature and favour, then so can we.

The Word of God encourages us that “if anyone lacks wisdom let him ask God, who gives generously” (James 1:5).

God's heart for each of us, as it was for Jesus, is that we would grow in wisdom, stature and favour. It is His Spirit within us that yearns for us to grow in this area and it His Spirit within us that empowers us to succeed.

As we reflect on 2021 and what He is stirring inside our hearts, let's trust God to grow us in wisdom.

Reflect

Reflecting on the Gospels, what are some of the things you believe Jesus did that resulted in growth in wisdom, stature and favour?

Solomon asked God for wisdom so that he could rule wisely. What are the key issues we are facing today that require great wisdom to tackle effectively?

DAY 11: GOD IS GRACIOUS

PSALM 145:8

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

Additional Reading: Isaiah 30:18, Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Corinthians 12:9

Do you ever feel like you struggle to fully accept that our Heavenly Father is gracious – courteous, kind, showing favour, slow to anger - towards you? I know I have, many times. However, it is God’s character to be gracious, whether we accept it or not. He treats us graciously from the basis of His goodness, rather than by any merits of our character or works. So why do we struggle so much with accepting God’s graciousness towards us? I think we need to change some of the beliefs we hold about God’s grace. These beliefs include those that say that we are not worthy to receive God’s grace, that it is something to earn or return and that there is a limit to it. We must understand that:

- God’s grace assures us of forgiveness, blessings and kindness that we don’t deserve. In addition to this, we don’t get the wages that we do deserve for our sins, which is death (Romans 6:23).
- It is not just for a privileged few. It is for *all*. And it is especially for the most broken.
- Grace is free. Nothing is expected in return other than our acceptance of the gift. God’s grace is lavished on us because He is an infinite source and His love is great. His grace is sufficient to cover all of our sin and shame, over and over.

Once we begin to understand and accept that God is gracious towards us, we can fully step into His presence, into His purpose for our lives and begin to be gracious towards others.

Reflect

In which ways do you struggle with understanding and accepting God’s grace?

How will you endeavour to experience God as gracious?

DAY 12: GOD IS LOVE

1 JOHN 4:10

“In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Love is not just a fuzzy feeling. It is not dependent on how I feel about you today. God made a decision and a choice to love us. This type of love is called *agape* love. When we had our children, we fell in love with them way before we met them and way before we conceived them. We had amazing, exciting thoughts and prosperous dreams regarding them.

We knew that they wouldn't be perfect, and we didn't know the fullness and the extent of their imperfection, yet the love we had for them overcame all the what if's. Even if we had known, it wouldn't have stopped us from having them. I remember when I held our first child in my arms. Honestly, I had never felt love like that ever before. It was perfect and unconditional love. He was perfect in my sight. My son didn't have to smile or do somersaults to impress me and make me love him more. I loved him before I met him. God's love towards us is even better!

J.I. Parker said, “to know God's love is indeed heaven on earth”. As 1 John 4:10 points out, it's “not that we loved God, but that He loved us”. He loved us first before we could love Him back. Ephesians 1:4 says, “even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault His eyes”. God's love was not simply a feeling or an opinion. It was a decision. He chose to love us, not because we could love Him back or do anything for Him.

That concept or revelation took me a long time to get. Many of us approach and see God with the lenses of earthly love. We understand love from an earthly perspective, which states that we are only worthy of love when we earn it. That type of love, earthly love, causes us to place unrealistic expectations upon ourselves and perform to human standards. It is flawed love. It's only there for as long as I show up for the expectations and standards placed upon me. God's love is pure, sacrificial and unrelenting. God demonstrated His love by sacrificing His only Son on the Cross so that He can have us forever. John taught that love needs to be acted out (1 John 3:18). This, again, is because of the example God has given to us. God sent Jesus to our world as an act of love (1 John 4:9). Here we find the purpose: the ‘propitiation’ for our sins. The word ‘propitiation’ involves a payment or sacrifice to cover the cost of our sins.

Under the Mosaic Law, the Jews offered ongoing sacrifices for their sins. Yet Christ provided the only sufficient payment, once and for all, to cover the sins of the world. This is greater love. God is loving and He demonstrates it through His Word and through people as He commands us to love one another as He has loved us. I can be secure in the love of God and not perform for it because He first loved me.

Reflect

In which ways or areas of life have you struggled to accept God's love?
How can you demonstrate your love to God and to others?

DAY 13: GOD IS GLORIOUS

EXODUS 33:18-23

“Moses said, ‘Please show me your glory.’ And he said, ‘I will make all my goodness— pass before you and will proclaim before you my name ‘The Lord.’ And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.’ And the Lord said, ‘Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen.’”

“Please show me your glory.” What a thing to ask.

God had revealed Himself to Moses in a burning bush, He had sent Him to Egypt and shown Him the great power of God. Moses had seen God bring plagues, part waters, redeem a nation, cover a mountain with the cloud of His presence and speak with such great power and dread that the people of Israel begged Him not to speak to them directly. And after all of this, Moses says to God, “Please show me your glory”.

Without getting into the theology of what glory is and is not, I want to point out that Moses saw the power of God and asked for something that would make him feel like he had seen God. But had he not seen God? He had, of course. He had interacted with God. He had felt the presence and the power of God, but He was after something else. I don’t know if Moses could have articulated in the moment what I believe he was after. God’s response reveals that He knew what Moses was asking. Moses knew what God could do, but wanted to see Him. He was after intimacy and so was God. So God showed Himself to Moses in a way that no one outside of the garden had ever seen.

When Moses asked for the glory of God, God showed him that He cannot be separated from His glory. His glory is part of who He is. It emanates from who He is. To see the glory of God is to see God, because His glory is a reflection, perhaps even an extension, of who He is.

Reflect

Can you describe how God has revealed Himself to you?

God showed Himself to Moses because he asked. If you could ask God for one thing, what would it be?

DAY 14: GOD IS SELF-SUFFICIENT

GENESIS 1:26

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’”

Looking at an ocean is one of the best things one can do. It looks like it has no end. It also never runs out of water in the way that dams, lakes and rivers sometimes do. An ocean is the closest thing that resembles self-sufficiency or self-reliance, but it is not. We can think of many other things that may come across as self-reliant and yet they are not. God is the only one who is self-sufficient. When God said “let us”, it shows that God was neither alone nor lonely. He exists as a triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, from eternity to eternity. God is not a man; He’s not a human being like us. Even though we are created in His image, we have needs that we can’t meet by ourselves. The big question is that, if God is self-sufficient, why did He create humankind and the world? The answer is love. He made us because He loves to create. The Lord God is the ultimate, original artist of the ultimate, original masterpiece - all of creation. He made the world and all it contains, saying “it is good”. Then He made mankind and after which He said “it is very good”. He then blessed man and gave him dominion over all the earth. He wants us to experience an infinite measure of the fullness of joy and blessing that He knows infinitely, all to rebound to the praise and glory of His name, the Giver and Provider of all the good we enjoy. When the apostle Paul addressed the Areopagus in Athens, he said, “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, *as though he needed anything*, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:24-25). We would do well to consider a theology, a worship and ministry, that sees God as self-sufficient, self-existent and complete in all respects. Jonathan Edwards argued in the 18th century that the end or the ultimate purpose for which God created the world was for the praise of His glory. Thus, our chief end and God’s chief end are one and the same: to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever (Westminster Shorter Catechism). Worship reveals *our* greatest need, not the Shepherd’s. Worship is a reflection of God’s own greatness, with faith-filled reverence and joy, in the knowledge of His truth. God is complete in Himself. When we worship Him, we are not adding to His greatness, but rather expressing our satisfaction in Him and in His greatness.

Reflect

How is this understanding of God’s self-sufficiency going to impact your worship?

How is it going to impact your reliance on yourself?

DAY 15: GOD IS RIGHTEOUS

PSALM 89:13-14

“You have a mighty arm; strong is your hand, high your right hand. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.”

The primary words that the biblical writers use for righteousness (*tsedek* and *dikaiosune*) denote, in a physical sense, ‘being straight’, or in a moral sense, ‘being right’, and hence, ‘conformity to an ethical or moral standard’ - being and doing what is right. One who is righteous ‘lives up’ to expected obligations; he acts in accordance with what *should* be done.” (Fred Zaspel) In a meme I recently saw, the text on the image simply said, *“But what could you have done for your sins to be higher than the mountain?”* This was meant to be humorous in its literal interrogation of a line commonly used in worship and Gospel songs. The more I read it, the more I became embarrassingly aware of how it was not unfounded to compare my sins to the highest mountains in the known world. If we don’t have the righteousness of God as the standard and basis through which we view sin, then it is mere poetry to compare sins to mountains. The simple truth is that God is righteous and, without Him, we are not. It is impossible for us to consider the righteousness of God when we use ourselves as the measuring stick. We are so flawed that, if we do this, we can only view God’s righteousness through our very compromised and stained glasses. We minimise how righteous God is in the same way that a child, who has only ever crawled to the front door, could imagine what traveling to another continent would be like.

Fred Zaspel summarises God’s righteousness as an attribute that is essential to God’s very being. His righteousness characterises all that He does. Zaspel continues to say that God is morally and ethically right, and He only acts in keeping with what is right and just.

After I read that meme, I texted a friend and listed the array of sins that I would commit during the short trip between my home and my office. Well, the sins I was comfortable to admit publicly. These included judging other drivers, envying cars that were better than mine and attempting to speed up when I saw the amber light. Some were more heartbreaking than that, such as ignoring the homeless and placing my needs above their needs. If God had any of these traits, He would cease to be righteous. Not only is righteousness who God is, but it’s at the very foundation of His throne. His rulership cannot stand without Him being righteous. We can trust Him because He is righteous and all that He does is built, established and grounded in this truth.

Reflect

How does knowing that God’s righteousness is the basis for His actions - which can only be right and just - affect how you will relate to Him in future?

Has the revelation of God’s righteousness given you a new appreciation for the Gospel? How will this grow your faith?

DAY 16: GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

PSALM 16:8

"I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken!"

I remember clearly a day over 30 years ago when my Bible college principal, Dr Rex Mathie, said, "All of God is everywhere, present all of the time". It rocked my world so much that I read through my Bible from cover to cover using a yellow highlighter and marked every word, verse or passage that spoke about the presence of God. God's omnipresence is such a huge theme from Genesis to Revelation that it is practically impossible to open my marked Bible to a page without yellow highlighting. No wonder I call it my NYV - my New Yellow Version! Here is a little taste of what the Bible says about God's presence. God is present:

- in Creation (Genesis 1:2, 3:8)
- in specific places like the Tabernacle, Jerusalem and the Temple (Exodus 25:22, 2 Chronicles 6:6, 2 Chronicles 6:2)
- in *all* places (Psalm 139:7-12)
- in tough times (Psalm 91:15)
- in the prophets (Jeremiah 1:7-8)
- in Jesus (Matthew 1:23, 18:20, 28:20)
- in believers (1 Corinthians 6:15)
- in the Church (Ephesians 2:22), and
- in eternity (Revelation 21:3)

How awesome is our God and how unlike us? As humans, sometimes we are not present even when we are physically present. We don't hear everything that is said and we get so easily distracted. But our God is always attentive to us, always leaning into every conversation we have and He is continually communicating with us. Plus, He never sleeps (Psalm 121:4).

There are so many examples in the Bible of people who were not aware of God's presence (such as Jacob in Genesis 28, the Emmaus disciples in Luke 24 and even Jesus' own disciples in John 21). So don't feel bad if you have moments when you forget that God is with you. Just work on experiencing God through your senses. Use sight, sound, smell, taste and touch to experience the world, to direct your attention towards God and to create practical reminders of God's presence so you keep turning towards God during your day.

As we practice the discipline of experiencing the presence of God throughout our day, we discover that it is the secret to:

- Intimacy: When we engage with God, we grow closer to Him (Psalm 63:6-8).
- Security: When we know that God is with us, we will not be afraid (Isaiah 43:1-7).
- Holiness: When we spend time in God's presence, we are conformed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Reflect

What can you do practically to remind yourself that God is always with you?

How could you use your senses to increase your level of engagement with God to experience?

DAY 17: GOD IS OMNISCIENT

PSALM 139:1-6

“O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it.”

Additional Reading: Psalm 147:5, Isaiah 55:9, 1 John 3:20

I was blessed with the most wonderfully patient grandmother. I can remember the day, though, that I managed to exasperate her with endless questions about the world around us. It was a warm summer's day and we were sharing a cup of tea, as the British are accustomed to do regardless of the outdoor temperature. During this specific afternoon rendezvous, I leapt at the opportunity to interrogate her as to why the sky is blue and not purple. Purple was my favourite colour, after all, and I truly believed that a different colour palette should have been used when God had 'painted' the sky. After 15 minutes of incessant badgering, she eventually cried out, "Only God knows!"

God knows! Yes, the omniscient God, having infinite awareness, understanding and insight, truly does know all things. As 1 John 3:20 says, "for whenever our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and He knows everything".

God's omniscience means that He can never learn anything new. Nothing can surprise Him or take Him unaware. He is never blind-sided. A firm belief in God's omniscience provides us as Jesus-followers with divine confidence in every area of our lives.

- 1. In God's omniscience, we have confidence that He will provide for our needs:** "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:31-33)
- 2. In God's omniscience, we can have confidence that nothing is beyond His comprehension:** "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" (Romans 11:33-34)
- 3. Because of God's omniscience, we can be authentic before him:** "O Lord, you have searched me and known me!" (Psalm 139:1)
- 4. In God's omniscience, we have confidence that justice will prevail:** "For his eyes are on the ways of a man, and he sees all his steps. There is no gloom or deep darkness where evildoers may hide themselves." (Job 34:21-22)
- 5. God's omniscience assures us that all questions have answers:** "Great is our Lord, and abundant in power; his understanding is beyond measure." (Psalm 147:5)

Furthermore, Isaiah 55:9 tells us that God's ways are higher than our ways and that His thoughts are beyond our comprehension. Trusting in His omniscience assures us that, while

there are many things in life that we cannot understand, we can trust that He knows what He is doing and that His perfect purposes will be for our good and for His glory.

Reflect

How does knowing that God is omniscient shape your perspective on life?

Think about a situation in your life where you feel uncertain of the best way forward. Write it down in the space below and bring it before our omniscient Father, asking Him for the wisdom and insight that comes from Him alone.

DAY 18: GOD IS OMNIPOTENT

PSALM 71:18

***“So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your ———
might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”***

It takes time to have great stories about God’s power. He is omnipotent, which means ‘all-powerful’. When we first get to know Jesus, it’s often the story that He saved us that constitutes all the testimony we have of His power. But as the years go by, we have story after story of how God came through at key moments in our lives with power to resolve situations or provide for the needs around us – stories of our own, stories of the saints around us, even stories of Christian leaders.

We might wonder why God allows trials at all. If God is all-powerful, surely He could have thwarted the trials beforehand. Our answer often lies in the second part of Psalm 71:18 – it is so that you might proclaim His might to another generation. Take this part of your trials seriously.

You are to tell your story in such a way that people will wonder at the greatness of an omnipotent God. In the Scripture above, the writer is asking God not to let a single one of these trials be finished badly, to not let the speaker be forsaken, until he or she has yet another testimony of God’s power to speak to the coming generations.

How long will it take for your current trial to be finished? There are many who say that the COVID-19 pandemic and the hardships arising from the pandemic are a sign that God has forsaken us. Don’t believe it. God is all-powerful and He is able to bring good from evil. *All things work together for good* for “those who love God... who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). God brings His *power* and His *compassion* to surprise each one of us in every trial. Never let a trial finish until there is a way to glorify God for how the story turned out. Wait for your testimony.

Reflect

What trial in my life or in the life of someone close to me do I wish would just end? Have you asked God to show you what good He might want from the trial? If you cannot find the good in a trial, can you find faith that there *is* a good conclusion coming because you trust God?

What testimonies do I have that I am ready to share of God’s power in my life? Practice telling one of your stories of His power so that you are ready to proclaim it when God needs you to do so.

DAY 19: GOD IS OUR HELPER

ZACHARIAH 4:6

“Then he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.’”

Additional Reading: Isaiah 40:4, Ezra 4:1-5, John 14 & 16

Ever heard the saying about making a mountain out of a molehill? We have all done just that. But then again, how do you know if it's a mountain or a mere molehill you are facing? It's a scary thing to stand facing a seemingly unsurmountable cliff face in front of you. It surely doesn't look like a molehill to you and, try as you may, you cannot see a way around it. What's more, the longer you look at it, the scarier it becomes. Fear has crept into your heart and you are feeling overwhelmed.

God tells Zechariah that the problem facing the Israelites, although it may appear to be a mountain, is actually a molehill. In Zechariah 4:7, the angel of the Lord says, “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

How can we command the mountain in front of us to become a plain?

Let's take a moment to understand this passage better. We read in verses 1 to 5 that an angel woke Zachariah up with a vision. In this vision, Zachariah saw a lamp stand of gold with a bowl for oil on top of it and seven lamps on it. There were seven pipes to each of the seven lamps. There were two olive trees – one on the right and one on the left of the lamp stand – feeding it continuously with oil. When Zachariah asked what this means, the angel said that the bowl yielding a ceaseless supply of oil from the olive trees is the Word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts”.

The lamps were burning continually, supplied with oil from the living olive trees. Zerubbabel did not have to be discouraged because of his weakness, because it is the living Spirit of God who affects the change. Sometimes God uses us as His instruments, but He doesn't need our help. Our weakness poses no obstacle to God, because He brings strength out of our weakness.

The ‘might’ and ‘power’ in verse 6 refer to our physical, mental and moral strength – and here the Lord shows us that it is by His Spirit that His purposes will be accomplished in our lives and in the Body of Christ. It is not our own strength that will bring the victory. When we rely on the Holy Spirit to be our helper, we are literally receiving a continuous flow of His grace and power. Jesus said that He is sending us a ‘helper’. This word ‘parakletos’ means helper, advocate or counsellor. The Holy Spirit reveals God's thoughts, teaching and guiding believers into all truth. The Holy Spirit also helps us in weakness and intercedes for us.

As we recognise our weaknesses and fears, as we surrender them to God and trust Him to be our strength, as we walk in close fellowship with the Holy Spirit – the One who sticks closer than a brother – He will supply us with an endless flow of strength, wisdom and grace to face anything.

Trust Him today with your mountain and start walking, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God.

Reflect

What mountains are you facing today – at work, in your family, finances or some other area?

What did the Lord show you? How can you practically apply this Word to your situation today?

DAY 20: GOD IS OUR HEALER

PROVERBS 4:20-22

“...be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.”

My first exposure to African village life came in 1995 when I served in a tiny village northwest of Nairobi, Kenya. One day we learned that a little girl in our church was very sick. The pastors were called and, later, all the elders. As her condition worsened, the church called the whole congregation to a prayer meeting. I remember speaking to the father of the child. He said that everyone was praying and there was nothing left to do, that God would decide her fate. Then he said, as an afterthought, “Of course, we could take her to a doctor”.

I was astonished. In my western thinking, I assumed that was the first thing to do and that it was already done. This godly group of saints had applied many levels of prayer before medical assistance was even considered!

Where does healing come from? Proverbs 4 says that health comes after you have inclined your ear (leaned in until you understood every word) to God’s sayings, and then kept those words (obeyed them) in your heart. For those people, there is *life* in the words of Scripture and healing to all flesh!

Keeping the words of Scripture in your heart is everything. There is power in all words, but there is healing power in the Word of God.

Here is one of the words we must heed: “Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.” Proverbs 3:7-8 When you are dealing with your own health issues or those of others, remember that you must turn away from evil first. There is life and healing in Scripture. The Lord may direct you to a doctor or to various medicines, but start with His Word.

Reflect

Do you have faith to start with Scripture and prayer or would you resort to the Lord only after the doctor has done his best?

Have you ever thought of repentance as a step to health? Are you ready to use God’s recipe next time you or someone in your circle are sick?

DAY 21: GOD IS INFINITE

EXODUS 15:18 & 1 KINGS 8:27

“The Lord will reign forever and ever.”

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!”

Additional Reading: Isaiah 66:1, Acts 7:48-49

Is God too busy?

I am sure that you, like me, live a very busy life. We have so much on our plates, including family responsibilities, children who need focus and care and everything that comes with the world of work in our modern world. I often find myself struggling with managing my time, constantly making choices regarding where to place my focus. Do I spend 30 minutes on a call which I know is going to be long or do I answer the many emails flowing into my inbox? We try to be wiser, trying to multitask, find productivity hacks and do our best to keep our head above the water.

The challenge with this is that we then assume, because this is how we live, that God does the same thing – that He switches His focus to the loudest, most important or most needy situations and we get lost in the mix. This is not the case. C. S. Lewis, the renowned author and thinker, said the following: “God has infinite attention, infinite leisure to spare for each one of us. He doesn't have to take us in the line. You're as much alone with Him as if you were the only thing He'd ever created.” God can and does give us all His focused attention because He is infinite. This means that He is not limited in relation to time or to space. We see this throughout the Bible. God is not limited by time, as we read in Exodus 15:18: “The Lord will reign forever and ever”. He is also not limited by space: “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You; how much less this house that I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27). We serve an infinite God.

This is good news because it means that God hears us when we pray. He is attentive to our prayers and is not multitasking or focussed elsewhere while we are speaking to Him. He is with us, carries us and knows us individually. The God of the universe is there for you because of the blood of Jesus. However, the flip side of this is that God sees all things. You cannot hide things under the table and hope that God does not see. He does. This should inspire a healthy respect and fear of God, the infinite One.

God, in His infinite power, is not limited in the ways that we are limited. Let's together trust Him to work mighty things in and through our lives today and in this year ahead.

Reflect

As you go into your day, I would encourage you to listen for God's voice. What is He saying to you today?

Are there sins and attitudes of the heart which God is convicting you of? If so, take a moment right now to pray, ask forgiveness and walk in obedience.