

God is Faithful

Our God is... (Part 6)

Exodus 34:5-7

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Exodus 34:5-7, the clearest description of God in the Old Testament

- What you think about when you think about God is very important. It's the most important thing about you.
- A. W. Tozer - "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."¹
- "Our opinions about God will not change God, but they can change us."²
- John Mark Comer - "This is ground zero for a theology of God."³
- Evertt Huffard - "the most descriptive self-description of God in the Old Testament"

Review: context of Exodus 34 + characteristics of God already discussed

- Ask: In around 30 seconds or so, please describe the context leading up to God disclosing His character to Moses in Exodus 34:5-7.
- *Compassion* - a feeling word, a word used to describe the feeling a mother has towards her nursing baby
- *Grace* - God's favor towards His people, people who do not deserve God's favor and can never repay Him for His favor
- *Slow to anger* - literally translated as "long of nostrils." God is patient, but eventually, He will get angry because of the evil and suffering in the world.
- *Love* - God is love.

Exodus 34:5-7

Then the Lord came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the Lord. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation."⁴

¹ John Mark Comer, *God Has a Name* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 23.

² Austin Fischer, *Young, Restless, No Longer Reformed: Black Holes, Love, and a Journey In and Out of Calvinism* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), back cover.

³ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 32.

⁴ All biblical references in this document are taken from the New International Version (NIV). *The Holy Bible: New International Version*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.

The Faithful God

- Who is the most faithful person you know? What qualities make him or her reliable? What are some characteristics of faithful people? What words come to mind when you think of faithful people?
 - Reliable, consistent, steadfast, trustworthy
- God is faithful. He's the faithful God.
 - "abounding in love and **faithfulness**." (Exodus 34:6b)
 - He's abounding in faithfulness. He's got a lot of it. He's not lacking faithfulness. Faithfulness is core to God's character.
- *emet*⁵
 - The Hebrew word *emet* is translated as "faithfulness."
 - It literally means "truth."
 - It's also connected to the word "amen."
 - It can also be translated as "trustworthy." It has the idea of *reliability*.
 - Walter Brueggemann - "It [*emet*] is witness to Yahweh's complete reliability."⁶
- God is reliable, trustworthy, steadfast, consistent, and faithful. You can count on Him. He will always do what He says He will do. You can count on Him.
- *Psalm 89:1-2, 28, 33* - I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself...I will maintain my love to him forever, and my covenant with him will never fail...but I will not take my love from him, nor will I ever betray my faithfulness.
- Covenant
 - Central to understanding the faithfulness of God is *covenant*.
 - "Covenant was essentially a hybrid between a promise and a legal contract. It was relational. Two (or more) people would make a promise and then sign a contract, with clearly defined blessings and curses for keeping or breaking that promise."⁷
 - Similar to marriage
 - Covenant is a major theme of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.
 - Covenant with Abraham to bless the whole world
 - Genesis 12 - God made Abram a promise

⁵ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 194.

⁶ Walter Brueggemann, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Introduction to the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 1 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 485.

⁷ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 198.

- "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." (Genesis 12:2-3)
- Notice the "I will" language.⁸
- God will bless the people of God (Abraham's descendants), and the people of God will bless the world.
- This is not the end of the story for Abraham. He and his wife are old, and they had no kids. How would his descendants bless the world if he had no descendants? Is God faithful? Can He be trusted? Was God wrong? Does God keep His promises?
- In Genesis 15, God makes a covenant with Abraham.
 - "Cutting the Covenant" - God tells Abraham to gather animals (a bull, goat, ram, birds). Abraham cuts the animals in half and spreads them out on the ground. In those days, this was the sign of the covenant. Both parties would walk between the dead animals as a sign that they would be dead like these animals if they broke the covenant they made together.⁹
 - God then makes Abraham fall into a deep sleep. Then Abraham sees a vision of God walking through the animals all by Himself.
 - "Even if Abraham and his children don't keep their end of the bargain, he'll still keep his promise. He'll rescue and save the world through this soon-to-be nation. No matter the cost. And if blood has to be spilled, it won't come from Abraham. It will come from Yahweh himself. He's willing to die and become like these animals just to keep his promise to bring the world back to life."¹⁰
 - Abraham and his wife Sarah eventually have a son named Isaac.
 - "The entire Bible is about Yahweh faithfully keeping his covenant with Abraham's family, and Israel failing miserably on her end."¹¹
- God is faithful to not abandon His people.

⁸ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 199.

⁹ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 201.

¹⁰ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 202.

¹¹ Comer, *God Has a Name*, 202.

- *Nehemiah 9:17* - They refused to listen and failed to remember the miracles you performed among them. They became stiff-necked and in their rebellion appointed a leader in order to return to their slavery. But you are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Therefore you did not desert them.
- God is faithful to forgive His people.
 - *1 John 1:9* - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- God is faithful when His people undergo trials.
 - *1 Corinthians 10:13* - No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.
 - In Greek, the word for tempted can also be translated as tested.
- God keeps His promises.
 - He will do what He says He'll do. He will fulfill every promise.
 - What are some of the promises of God? What are some of your favorite promises of God?
 - "In this world you will have trouble." (*John 16:33*)
 - "I am with you always." (*Matthew 28:20*)
 - *Hebrews 13:5* - "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'"
 - God keeping His promises can be either good or bad for you, depending on your relationship with Him.
 - God is faithful to save His people. He is also faithful to judge the world.
- God is faithful even when we're not faithful.
 - *2 Timothy 2:13* - "if we are faithless, he remains faithful"
 - The Israelites were not faithful. They complained, broke the commands as soon as they were given, and made and worshipped false gods. But God was faithful to them.
 - We mess up all the time. We fail God. Other people fail us. But God has never failed us.

How does Jesus exemplify faithfulness?

- We've pointed this out every week of this study on the characteristics of God: Jesus is the clearest picture of God we've got. "[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God...in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (*Colossians*

1:15, 19). God is like Jesus. Jesus is like God. If you want to know what God looks like, look at Jesus. This means that if God is a faithful God, Jesus perfectly exemplifies the faithfulness of God.

- Jesus is the most faithful person. He was completely reliable and trustworthy.
- *John 1:14* - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- What examples from Jesus' life display His faithfulness?
 - His going to the cross. He remained faithful to the very end.

Our Response to the Faithful God

- Rest in the promises of God. (*Exodus 33:13*)
 - *Exodus 33:13-14* - [Moses speaking] "If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people." The Lord replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."
 - When Moses asks to understand more about God (*Exodus 34:5-7*), God responds to Moses and says He will give Moses rest.
 - Remember that God will do what He says.
 - Rest in the fact that God will forgive your sins (*1 John 1:9*).
 - Rest in the fact that God will always be with you. (*Hebrews 13:5*)
 - Rest in the fact that even when you fail to be faithful, God will always be faithful. (*2 Timothy 2:13*)
- Grow in your faith and trust in God.
 - To grow in your faith means you're trusting God more and more.
 - *Hebrews 11:1* - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
 - "Hope is the absolute expectation of coming good based on the character of God."¹²
 - Faith is trusting in God.
 - It's much better to have a little trust in something that is ultimately trustworthy than a lot of trust in something that is untrustworthy.
 - Illustration of someone falling from a cliff

¹² Comer, *God Has a Name*, 206.

- Timothy Keller - "The faith that changes the life and connects to God is best conveyed by the word 'trust.' Imagine you are on a high cliff and lose your footing and begin to fall. Just beside you as you fall is a branch sticking out of the very edge of the cliff. It is your only hope and it is more than strong enough to support your weight. How can it save you? If your mind is filled with intellectual certainty that the branch can support you, but you don't actually reach out and grab it, you are lost. If your mind is instead filled with doubts and uncertainty that the branch can hold you, but you reach out and grab it anyway, you will be saved. Why? It is not the strength of your faith but the object of your faith that actually saves you. Strong faith in a weak branch is fatally inferior to weak faith in a strong branch."¹³
 - The object of our faith is more important than the amount of faith we have in it, as long as we act on that faith.
 - You might have doubts. You might not have a strong faith in God. But a small amount of faith in God is infinitely better than a lot of faith in anything else.
- We've pointed this out each week in this study on the characteristics of God: God created us in His image (*Genesis 1:27*). This means we are to be like Him. This means we're to strive to be faithful like Him.
 - Be a more trustworthy and faithful person.
 - Can people count on you?
 - Be the type of person others can count on.
 - Do what you say you're going to do.
 - Be consistent.

¹³ Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2008), 244-245.