

Week 5: Expectations

Who is God: *The Old Testament God of Love*

Why on earth would I have you look into laws, commands, and rules in the Bible. I might as well have you read and recite the lists of generations. I could also have you eat dry toast breakfast, lunch, and supper. It's probably not the best way to sell God and the Christian life. It sounds boring, burdensome, and bogged down in religious mumbo jumbo.

The reason I went that route is because of the example of a car. I just read an article that says women voted along party lines more than because Hillary was a woman. The democrats targeted female voters but the female voters targeted the party over gender. That was very interesting. I bet buying a car is the same way.

I was a Chrysler dude for a long time. At some point the dealership began not acting like the Chrysler I once loved. By chance someone asked me to give Mazda a try. I was skeptical and visited the old Chrysler stomping grounds first. Something was out of place so I snuck into the Mazda lot just to see. Within minutes the dealer had me sold. I loved Mazda. So much so that I now own 2. I think we are devoted to what works. I think we are devoted to what we love. I also think we are devoted to who loves us. What are you loyal to? Think of these questions while you reflect on your answers.

1. Am I loyal to my job?
 2. Am I loyal to women or a certain type of gender?
 3. Am I loyal to a phone brand?
 4. Am I loyal to my principles?
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I loved my Chrysler cars and trucks until they broke down. I disliked the service so I left. To an outsider it appears I fell out of love with the dealership because of how they treated me. In the Old testament, we get a strange reaction. At times God asked the people to behave. They did not and the wrath of God was kindled against them.

Deuteronomy 32:22 *"For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains."*

Seems like scorched earth to me.

1. Is God a being of love or anger to you?

If God of the old testament is just wrathful, angry, and scorched earth then where could there be love? How could there be love? It's a real shame if Christians only talk about Jesus and the new testament. It's a shame if Christians ignore the God of the Old testament. To begin someone's journey with God only in the new testament is a travesty. All of the new testament exists because of the work done in the old.

It's like this. If I find out a co-worker is hard to work with I could easily fire them. It's so simple. I hate you, your gone. Take this lesson. Abraham Lincoln had an adversary in debates. Lincoln appointed him to command his army because he knew the man's character. Although there was tension and difference of opinion. Lincoln knew above all else he could trust the character of that man.

Let's begin to know the God of the Old testament and see how the people viewed him. If we're going to trust him then we need to experience his character. Look at the verses below and think about who is writing them. Why are they loyal to God? They have a respect for God because of his consistent approach to them in love beyond all else.

Read these verses below for next week.

Extra reading for fun. Look up these extra passages to see how much the supposedly God of wrath is adored. 1 Kings 8:23, Psalm 52:8, Daniel 9:4

1. I have watched kids playing with Play-doh. They rip it apart and mash it together. Us parents buy the colors separately but within minutes' kids will have mixed them into a colorful mess. Kids love playing with that stuff. They also always want to show you what they have made. The Bible goes out of its way to say God delighted in creating. There is no anger in the first two chapters.

We expect God to be angry. Do you know why you expect that? In these first two chapters of Genesis, God says what he made was very good. He is concerned for the man and tries to make him a suitable helpmate. God lets man name the animals. God provides all they need. Is that the actions of an angry God?

Genesis 1: 31 *"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day."*

2. The people in the old testament saw the wrath of God. He closed the sea on pharaohs army. He flooded the earth and destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet these very people sang songs of praise to God. They described him in glowing reports as compassionate and loving. These people

witnessed the mighty power of God. They saw his pillars of fire. They saw him split the sea. He rained down fire and brimstone on the wicked. Still they praised him.

The flip side has God negotiating with Abraham to save a town. We see Moses negotiating with God to save his people. God puts his hand over Moses to protect him. The people are warned to stay away from God because his power is too great. God provides manna and water in the desert. God goes before them to fight their battles. This powerful God even helps them build a tent so he could dwell among them. Yet again, the people praise him.

Genesis 24:27 *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not abandoned his kindness and faithfulness to my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master’s relatives.”*

Exodus 34:6 *“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,*

3. These verses in Deuteronomy are famous (Duet 6:4-9) This is called the Shema in the Middle East. When you here that famous yelling or singing in the Middle East they are using this piece of the Bible. To this day, Muslims, Jewish, and Christian people sing songs of praise. They say the story of the Bible is about 6000 years old. There is no proof how old really. The ancient story is so old that nothing remains to correlate a time frame. To worship one God for that long must mean something. Certainly, businesses and traditions come and go. Why do these three religions still claim to worship one God?

In our world, we can worship anything. I know that one group wants church status to worship the force from Star Wars. They say that from Jesus time and further back there were no atheists. True or not, Gods were part of their lives. People sold idols or images of Gods. They made temples. There were human sacrifices. We are examining this God. Why does he claim to be love? Why does he claim to be one? Why does he refuse idols and human sacrifices? This God in the Bible was different. They worship him then and today because he is constant and different.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

4. Joseph was sold by his brothers into Egyptian slavery. He became a powerful ruler in that powerful kingdom. The God of the Hebrews humbled and trained Joseph to be compassionate and kind. He had the power to kill those responsible for his sorrow, yet he chose to love instead. Does that reflect the teaching of a wrathful God?

I am stunned really. Abraham must have despised Sodom and Gomorrah. They were not best allies. Why negotiate to save them? His brother Lot was there. They had parted ways. Why try and save him? King David had several opportunities to kill his enemies. On more than one occasion he refused out of respect for them. What made Moses fight his fears and speak to Pharaoh? This God induces his character in those who love him. It seems that if you want God then his character becomes your character. There is something strange and curious within that.

Genesis 50:20 *“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.”*

The Jesus Connection

To know Jesus is to know God. To know God is to know Jesus. I purposely began this study of God in reverse of most introductions into Christianity. Almost 100% of them begin with Jesus. I feel that is putting the cart before the horse. Christians have been trained to promote Jesus. They are trained to tell you Jesus is love. They are supposed to ask you to trust in him from day one. Isn't Jesus a stranger to you at this point? Oh, you have heard stories. People tell you he is the good news. He is the way to God. Yes, yes indeed he is the way to God. Yet, God is also the way to Jesus. The People in the old Testament did not know Jesus. All they knew was that God promised a messiah or Christ to save them. To understand Jesus is to understand how we get to Jesus. Jesus is everything God is. The people in Jesus day knew God but they did not know Jesus until they could see that they were the same person. Jesus carried the character of their God. That is the key.

The Jesus connection is in these verses below. This study of God will open your eyes to God. Within that you will see Jesus very clearly by the end of 13 weeks. Look at the passages below. Proverbs comes from the Old Testament. God says he loves those who love him. 1 John repeats this theme by proclaiming that God is love. Ephesians 3:19 was written after Jesus died. The writer Paul attaches the Christ to God in a bond of Love. Finally, read John 3:16. Jesus is connected to the God of the Old Testament in the eyes of those who met him. That is the Jesus connection.

Proverbs 8:17 "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me."

1 John 4:8 "Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Ephesians 3:19 "and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."