

CHARACTER OF GOD

WHAT IS GOD LIKE? PART V: LOYAL LOVE

Reading Assignment

Have students read 2 Samuel 2:1-7 and Psalm 31.

Intro Discussion:

What is love? How does our culture define it? How does the Bible define it?

What does it mean that Jesus loves us? Do you believe it? How has it changed your life?

Today we are going to talk about God's "steadfast love."

Content:

Read 2 Samuel 2:1-7 together.

- We are using this passage to get a better understanding for a term we read in Exodus 34:6-7, that God shows "steadfast love." The Hebrew used is "hesed," which is a difficult word to translate into English.
- The word is used twice in this passage from 2 Samuel, and the ESV translates the same word (hesed) in two ways.
- Context: the first king of Israel, Saul, has died in battle. The next king, David, is taking the throne. However, there were some men who found Saul's body and buried it. This was an act that put them in danger. When a new king took over the best thing to do for someone's own self-preservation and advancement would be to show loyalty to the new king, not the dead one!
- David points out that these men showed loyalty (hesed) towards Saul (vs. 5). He then prays that God may show "steadfast love" to them (vs. 6). This word is the same word: hesed!

So, what is this steadfast love? What hesed?

- It's love in its truest sense. In the New Testament the Greek word "agape" is used. It's a self-giving, generous, and kind love. It's offered even when there will be no benefit from the person offering it. In fact, it often means the person offering this hesed or agape is taking on the role of a humble servant.
- Hesed is selfless love, but it's also loyalty. It's a commitment to act on behalf of the other person, even if that action costs the person something.

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As we talk about this concept of hesed, or loyal and generous love, what are some examples you can think of in your life or our world?

- Hesed is an elderly man who has been married for 50 years. His wife is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, where her brain will slowly die. He cares for her as long as he can. He feeds her, helps her get dressed, bathes her. He does this because of his loyal and generous love towards her.
- The ultimate example of generous and loyal love is Jesus and the cross (see Romans 5:8). We had done nothing to deserve this love, and it cost Jesus everything, but he did it anyway! Why? Because of his loyal, steadfast, kind, and generous love and commitment towards us.

Does this conversation change the way you view God's love? Has anything been clarified for you? In what ways?

How does this conversation change your relationship with God?

If our character is to be like God's, what does it look like for us to walk with hesed, with loyal and generous love towards people?

Challenge:

Who do you need to be generous with your love this week? Identify at least one person that you need to go out of your way to ACT on their behalf in one way or another. How can you SERVE someone this week? In a way that you will not necessarily benefit from?

For next week, read Psalm 40.