

the CHARACTER of God

Exodus 34:6-7

“Exodus 34:6-7 is the first description of God’s character and the most quoted passage in the Bible. In these two verses we learn that all of God’s actions are an expression of these attributes: compassion, grace, patience, loyal-love, and faithfulness. This list of God’s character traits has been carefully designed to help us see the meaning and importance of each one in relation to the others. Though it’s just two verses, this passage has a literary design that illustrates what God values and explains many of his actions throughout the biblical story.”

Worship:

We Praise You | *Bethel Music*

Hymn of Heaven | *Phil Wickham*

Be Enthroned | *Bethel Music*

Watch: [Character of God](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. Exodus 34:6-7 is the most referenced passage in the Bible. The biblical authors return again and again to this rich description of God’s character. Take some time to read these verses that quote from Exodus 34:6-7. (If you have a large group, feel free to break up into smaller groups to look up these verses.) Discuss what you noticed about the repetition of the characteristics of God.
 - NUMBERS 14:17-19
 - DEUTERONOMY 4:31
 - DEUTERONOMY 5:9-10
 - ISAIAH 63:7
 - JOEL 2:13
 - MICAH 7:18-19
 - PSALM 103:7-11
 - JONAH 4:1-2
 - PSALM 106:44-45
 - NEHEMIAH 9:17-19
2. When you read vs. 7 of Exodus 34, what is your initial response to the statement that God visits “the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation”? How did the video and the verses you read above help you see how God’s covenantal love (for thousands of generations) and his justice (not declaring innocent the guilty) relate to one another?

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3. Read Exodus 20:5-6. This describes God only punishing following generations who persist in the same behavior as their parents.
 - *You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands (of generations) of those who love me and keep my commandments.*
4. Read 2 Chronicles 30:8-9. Again, God is declaring His character and challenging this generation to not be like their fathers. What is God longing to do for a people that will return to Him?
 - *Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the Lord and enter his sanctuary which he has consecrated forever, and serve the Lord your God, that his burning anger may turn away from you. For if you return to the Lord, your brothers and your sons will find compassion before those who led them captive and will return to this land. For the Lord your God is gracious and compassionate, and will not turn his face away from you if you return to him.*
5. If someone were to ask you how you would describe God's character, which characteristics from Exodus 34:6-7 would you mention? Are there other ways you would describe God? What are some examples from your own life where you have seen God as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in loyal love, and faithful?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Spend time thanking God for who He is and how He has revealed Himself to you personally. Pray that you would continue to see God rightly and that all false beliefs about God would be eradicated from your life.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [Most Quoted Verse in the Bible](#)

Podcast: [God of Our Own Making](#)

Blog: [The Sins of Our Fathers](#)

Study Notes: [Character of God: Exodus 34:6-7](#)

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God is Compassionate

“When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, the very first word he uses to describe himself is the Hebrew word *rakhum*.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, **compassionate** and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal-love and faithfulness.”

Worship:

A Thousand Hallelujahs | *Brooke Ligertwood*

Blessed Be Your Name | *Matt Redman*

When I Lock Eyes | *Maverick City Music*

Watch: [Compassion](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. In the Bible, God’s compassion is consistently shown as both an emotional and active reality. Think back to last week’s discussion. What does God do when he feels compassionate? How does He respond when His people return to Him in order to follow Him? (See Deuteronomy 4:29-31, Micah 7:19, Isaiah 14:1, Isaiah 49:10, and Jeremiah 30:18.)
2. God’s ancient people fail to return to His ways and end up in exile. Read Isaiah 49:8-16, where God assures his people of his compassion during a dark chapter in Israel’s history. What comes to mind when you consider God’s compassion for His people being related to a mother’s care for her infant? What are some other ways you see God’s compassion described in this passage?
3. God’s compassion compels him to rescue His people from their self-destructive ways. Learn how God does this by entering into humanity and all of its suffering (see Isaiah 53). Discuss your observations. How do you see God’s compassion expressed?
4. Jesus entered into the suffering of humanity to bring restoration (see Matthew 9:35-36, Luke 13:34). What are some of the ways Jesus embodies the compassion of God?

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5. Describe the ways followers of Jesus are called to live out the same self-giving compassion of God (see Luke 6:35-36; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4; Colossians 3:12-13). What is one specific example of how this could be practiced in the life of the Church today?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Pray for greater revelation of the compassion God has towards you and ask God to give you a heart of compassion for those around you. Share one way you can live out of compassion this week and share with one another.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [The Womb of God](#)

Blog: [God is like a Nursing Mother](#)

Study Notes: [Compassion](#)

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God is Full of Grace

When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, one of the words he uses to describe himself is gracious, or in Hebrew, *khanun*.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal-love and faithfulness.”

Worship:

Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) | *Chris Tomlin*

Arms of My Father | *Antioch Music*

Living Hope | *Phil Wickham*

Watch: [Grace](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. The Hebrew word for “gracious” in Exodus 34:6 is “khanun,” which is related to the Hebrew noun “khen.” This word, “khen,” is often translated as “grace,” but it can also be translated with words like “delight,” or “favor.” The implication is also that favor is shown regardless of obligation or consideration of worth. Perhaps the best example of God showing undeserved favor is in the golden calf story in Exodus 32. Have someone summarize the story or read it together if you are unfamiliar with it. Then read Exodus 33:12-17 (ESV). What do you notice about the grace or favor of God?
2. When undeserving people cry out for God to be khanun or gracious (e.g. Psalm 4:1, Psalm 6:2-3, Psalm 25:16-20), how does God consistently respond (e.g. Psalm 103:8-11, Psalm 130:1-8, Isaiah 30:18-21)?
3. God’s consistent response of grace ultimately leads us to Jesus. So let’s turn to the New Testament, where the Greek word “kharis” is often translated as “grace.” Read John 1:14-18 aloud together in your group. How does Jesus fully embody God’s glorious grace?
4. When extraordinary gifts of grace are given, they cannot be experienced unless they are received. Read Ephesians 2:8-9 as well as 1 Peter 5:4-7. According to these passages, with what attitude do people receive God’s gift of kharis?



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Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Where do you need to once again receive the grace of God in your life? Take some time to thank God for the ways He has been gracious to you. Then, in humbleness, ask God to respond to the areas of your life where you need His undeserved grace. Ask the Holy Spirit how to follow the example of Jesus by extending grace to others.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [The Uniquely Biblical View of Grace](#)

Blog: [Biblical Grace and a Generous God](#)

Study Notes: [Grace](#)

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God is Slow to Anger

When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, one of the ways he describes himself is being slow to anger, or in Hebrew, 'erek 'apayim.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, **slow to anger**, overflowing with loyal-love and faithfulness.”

Worship:

Graves Into Gardens | *Brandon Lake*

Hosanna (Praise is Rising) | *Brenton Brown*

God of the Promise | *Elevation Worship*

Watch: [Slow to Anger](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. Read this quote from Abraham Heschel (*The Prophets Vol. 2, "The Theology of Pathos," p362*) as he explains that divine anger is not like human anger.
 - *“The prophets never [portray] God’s anger as something that cannot be accounted for, unpredictable, irrational. It is never a spontaneous outburst, but a reaction occasioned by the conduct of humans...and motivated by concern for right and wrong.”*
2. Who is the first person God gets angry with in the Bible? And in what biblical story does God’s anger first appear? The answer may surprise you. It’s not found in the stories of Adam and Eve, or the flood, or even Sodom and Gomorrah! It’s not until we are 54 chapters into the biblical story that we first see Yahweh get angry. Read Exodus 4:10-15. Notice a few things about this first appearance of God’s anger in the Bible.
 - This is Moses’ fifth objection to God’s commission to send Moses to confront Pharaoh. God’s anger does not lead to punishment or violence.
 - Instead, God makes a concession to Moses’ stubbornness and fear.

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3. To say that God is “long of nose” is to say that he is patient—it takes him a long time before he becomes angry. He gives people time to respond to his gracious warnings.
 - Read Romans 1:18-32 and Romans 2:4-11. What do you notice about the anger of God? What does God give people over to if they choose not to honor Him (Romans 1:24, 26, 28)?
 - What do you notice about his slowness to anger - his patience (Romans 2:4)?
4. In 2 Peter 3:9, we read one of the reasons behind God’s patience. How would you interpret this passage? What does it suggest to you about God’s character, and how does that change the way you see yourself and others?
5. Let’s consider how Jesus took the consequences of evil upon himself as we read Romans 5:6-11. How does Jesus’ self-giving love help us see God’s anger toward evil and his patient love for people at the same time?
6. When we come to the Bible, how we react to God’s anger often depends on our core beliefs about God’s character. For example, if I already think of God as a distant, all-powerful sovereign, then his anger will seem more like a dangerous and volatile expression of a deeply angry being. But if I think of God as a generous, creative father, then his anger will seem measured, fair, and a reasonable expression of his justice. How do you view God? Where do you recognize his patience – his slowness to anger – in your own life?
7. Share a key takeaway from this discussion with the group.

Prayer:

Let’s end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Thank God for his patience with you and thank Him that He sent Jesus to save us from his own wrath. Take time to honor God and give thanks to Him, acknowledging his rule and reign once again in our lives. Confess any sin that is entangling you and receive the forgiveness of God.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [God's Hot Nose](#)

Podcast: [The First Time God Gets Angry](#)

Podcast: [A Cup of Wrath](#)

Podcast: [God's Wrath in the Teaching of Jesus](#)

Podcast: [Two Men Named Jesus](#)

Podcast: [Saved from God's Wrath](#)

Blog: [Is the God of the Bible an Angry God?](#)

Study Notes: [Slow to Anger](#)

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God is Overflowing with Loyal Love

When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, one of the ways he describes himself is overflowing with loyal love, or in Hebrew, *khesed*.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal-love and faithfulness.”

Worship:

Goodness of God | *Bethel Music*

Your Love Never Fails | *Jesus Culture*

Reckless Love | *Cory Asbury*

Watch: [Loyal Love](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. The Hebrew word “khesed” combines the ideas of unconditional love, generosity, and enduring commitment. Read Psalm 136 aloud in your group, with each person using a different translation if possible. How do various translations help you understand the rich meaning of God’s forever enduring khesed? What are some expressions of his enduring commitment, according to Psalm 136?
2. Look up these examples of khesed:
 - Psalm 36:5-6: *God’s khesed is expressed by maintaining the stability of creation that sustains life*
 - Psalm 103:11-12: *God forgives the sins of his people*
 - Psalm 118:1: *God’s khesed shows His goodness*
 - Lamentations 3:22-23: *God doesn’t allow His people to be destroyed*
 - Micah 6:8: *Human khesed is expressed by doing justice and humbly honoring God’s commands*
3. Titus 3:4-7 gives us a good picture of God’s loyal love at work in our world. In this passage, what does it look like when God’s loving character appears? What does His love mean for you personally?

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4. God's loyal love internally motivates Jesus' followers to generously share what they've been given. What do you think it means for God's love to be inside of a person (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; John 15:9-13; 1 John 4:16)? How does God's love affect our actions toward those in need (e.g. 1 John 3:16-18)?
5. How does what you've discussed impact the way you live?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Any place in your life where you are not trusting in the faithful love of your Father, confess as unbelief, and pray for fresh revelation of God's perfect love for you. Ask God for His loyal love to reign in your heart so you can love others as he has loved you.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [The Loyal Love of God](#)

Blog: [How do we describe God's love?](#)

Study Notes: [Loyal Love](#)

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God is Faithful

When God reveals who he is to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, one of the ways he describes himself is faithful, or in Hebrew, *emet*.

“Yahweh, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, overflowing with loyal-love and **faithfulness.**”

Worship:

Do It Again | *Elevation Worship*

Yes and Amen | *Jesus Culture*

Promises – Radio Version | *Maverick City*

Great is Thy Faithfulness | *Christy Nockels*

Watch: [Faithful](#)

Read: Exodus 34:6-7

Discussion:

1. The Hebrew word “emet” is translated with words like “faithful,” “reliable,” “sure,” “trustworthy,” and “amen.” Read aloud Psalm 36:5-6, Psalm 19:7, and Psalm 41:13 and discuss what the psalmists are communicating in these passages when they use the word “emet.”
2. God promised the Israelites that he would give them a king of peace that would rule forever and ever (e.g. 2 Samuel 7:16). However, Israel’s kingdom collapsed and they found themselves without a home or a king. Compare the beginning of Psalm 89 (vv. 1-8) with the way it closes (vv. 46-52). What do you think it practically looks like to trust God when all seems lost?
3. Ultimately, God answers the psalmist’s cries in the person of Jesus. Compare 2 Samuel 7:16 to Hebrews 1:8-9. How does King Jesus embody and fulfill the ancient promises of God (e.g. John 1:14, Hebrews 3:5-6, and Romans 15:8-9)?

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4. Read Hebrews 10:22-25, Hebrews 11, and Hebrews 12:1-3. After reading these passages, name one example of what it looks like to put our trust in God.
5. How can you see/how have you experienced the faithfulness of God this week?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Confess any place in your life where you have ceased to trust God – to consider him faithful. Pray for one another, that you will be full of faith, believing in the goodness and faithfulness of God. Worship God together in prayer, confessing specific ways he has been faithful to you.

Dive Deeper:

Podcast: [Biblical Trust Isn't Blind](#)

Blog: [Can We Trust God in Difficult Times?](#)

Study Notes: [Faithful](#)