

WEEK 4 - God's Faithfulness in the Midst of Brokenness

Fall Focus 2024 // Canopy Guide

The Big Story

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Use the questions below to kickstart a community building, all-play conversation that connects to our weekly topic. If your group meets for dinner, these might be great questions to share around a table.

- If you are comfortable, share a story about a time where you tried to fix something that was broken. (Funny, serious, positive, & negative outcomes are all welcome.)
- What is the purpose of a law? Have you ever experienced a law that had unintended consequences?

VIDEO INTRO | STUDY GUIDE

Sometimes things don't go according to plan. Even with all the good intentions, forethought, and foolproofing, often the projects we set out to complete don't end up the way we thought. More often than not, a heavy bit of improvisation and corrections are needed to get things to look something like what we envisioned when we set out.

For every time in the Old Testament when it looks like things are working out all right, there are plenty more when things seem to be falling apart, right in front of God's eyes. Abraham's incredible willingness to listen to God and leave his home is countered by his inability to wait for God to provide him with a child. While Moses is on Mount Sinai and God is laying out the Covenant with Israel, the people are at the foot of the mountain worshipping a statue of a golden calf. As David and the kingdom of Israel are at the height of their power, David committed adultery (to put it lightly) with a married woman, beginning a chain of violence, corruption, and unfaithfulness in his family line. The story of Israel's history is a continual failure to live under God's lordship: they "miss the mark" over and over again.

But despite their turning away, God remains faithful. In the wake of Israel's disobedience,

worshiping the golden calf, God makes this declaration of who God is: “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exodus 34: 6-7). These words of God’s covenant are repeated all throughout Israel’s stories and songs. Though Israel wavers in their covenant obligations, God does not waver in the desire for presence with the people of God and for Israel to be a people of justice and blessing.

There are many stories from the Old Testament that show God’s faithfulness despite Israel’s rebellion. Within these stories, these two common themes are worth spending some time reflecting on: God bringing deliverance from captivity and God using humans to accomplish the work of reconciliation.

God’s steadfast love is displayed in God’s commitment to using people to accomplish the work of reconciliation. Even though God had shown Israel that the best way forward was for God to lead, they asked for a king because they thought they could do it better. To correct the abuses of leaders and kings and guide the people spiritually, God establishes the priesthood; to save Israel from the consequences of their rebellion, God sends the “judges;” to call for the people to turn from idolatry and injustice, God sends prophets.

The most striking displays of God’s steadfast love come in the stories of freedom from captivity. It’s such an essential part of who God is that right before giving the first of the 10 commandments (or words), God declares, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Exodus 20:2). This declaration is repeated all throughout the Old Testament by God and by God’s people. In addition to God’s action in Egypt, God sends judges to free Israel from foreign oppressors and ultimately brings the people out of exile under the Babylonian Empire. Despite human failure, God is always at work, offering steadfast, unfailing love to redeem God’s creation.

As we look towards Jesus and the cross, we can see how this gift is new *and* a continuation of who God has been and will be. From the beginning, God has been bringing order out of chaos, life out of death, and freedom out of captivity.

Scripture to Read

- Exodus 34:6-7
- Hosea 11
- Jonah 4

Scripture to Memorize

- Exodus 34:6-7

Deeper Discussion Questions

1. How many times does it take the Israelites to really get it? How many times does it

take us to get it? What causes us to keep thinking we can fix our problem of sin on our own when we know we cannot?

2. In what ways is God's love displayed in the Law that he gives?
3. How do you see the refrain from Exodus 34:6-7 play out through the stories of the Old Testament?
4. What will it take to fix a broken world? A broken life? A broken community?

PRAYER

Reflect on God's faithful presence with us through our own waning seasons of closeness and obedience or stubborn self-reliance. Make sure to claim some time as a group each week to pray specifically for each other.

EXTRA RESOURCES/ARTICLES/RESEARCH

1. Check out this 5 minute YouTube video from the Bible project on the theme of Covenant. It beautifully connects the covenants God makes through the OT, humanity's failure to uphold our end, and the way Jesus fulfills them with the New Covenant. [▶ The Covenants - Bible Project](#)
2. Bible Project - Character of God. This is a great 6 minute video that explains the refrain in Exodus 34 that describes God's character. [▶ Character of God • Character of God Series \(Episode 1\)](#)
3. Bible Project - Old Testament Summary (13 min video), connects the sections of the OT Bible and introduces major themes within them. [▶ Old Testament Summary: A Complete Animated Overview](#)
4. *The Broken find Healing in Jesus*
<https://desirejesus.com/blog/2018/12/18/the-broken-find-healing-in-jesus>