

Crazing at
God's Goodness



A Series on
Attributes of God's Goodness

How to use this book

Personal Devotions

- Use this book to help you read your Bible every day. You will find a guide that will help you read through and reflect on scriptures related to our sermon series. Scribble down your thoughts and questions and remember to pray and ask God to speak to you by His Spirit, through His Word. Additionally, we've included a personal contemplation prompt each week.
- Listen to our Spotify playlist by searching for the 'The Bridge Church – Songs We Sing' playlist.

Connect Groups

- Take this guide with you to your Connect Group each week. Bible Studies are provided at the end of the sermon notes section, so you could use this space to write down comments, questions and prayer points that come from the study that week and prayer requests from the members of your group.

Church

- Keep this guide with your Bible and bring it with you to church.
- Scribble down sermon notes in the space provided.

Dear Church,

Acts 9:31 reminds us of the growth experienced by the early church: 'Living in fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it [the church] increased in number'. As we continue to live in awe and reverence and obedience to the Lord, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, God has been so kind in increasing us in number. Let's not take for granted all the new people who join us each week, all the people who become Christians at our church, and all the ways God continues to transform us through His Word.

There are 4 things I'm excited about at church this term:

1. Seeing God raise up leaders for His church. As we farewell long time staff members and wait to see who God raises up for these new roles, we wait with expectancy. God will raise up His chosen people, and God will sustain us as a church family over this season. We are blessed with an extraordinarily gifted, able and servant hearted flock, so I'm excited to see people stepping up into leadership in this next chapter of The Bridge Church.
2. Raising the missional heat! Christianity Explored is a wonderful opportunity to invite family and friends to meet Jesus through the pages of Mark's gospel. The invitation is easy, the willingness to investigate Jesus seems to be there, but we are often lacking boldness. If Christianity Explored is not for you, then make the most of 'Conversations that Matter' in September, where we'll be grappling with questions like 'Is God good when there's so much pain and despair in the world?' Both on Sundays and midweek, we have opportunity to engage with these questions. We also have the privilege of welcoming some of our mission partners for our Mission Focus Weekend, as we think about our Father's Heart for His World.
3. Central Prayer continues to be the engine room of this church. God has been doing remarkable things through our Central Prayer Gatherings on the 1st Wednesday of each month. This term we continue to commit to interceding for our community, our world and the individual at church – knowing God's heart is for us, not against us. We'd love you to join us, so our gatherings are overflowing.

4. Gatherings every Sunday! Nothing beats gathering with God's people every Sunday, to worship Him, adore Him, be built up in the faith and care for one another. As we look at the attributes of God our minds will be stretched, our hearts warmed, so we truly encounter God in a life changing way.

Please continue to pray for all our leadership team – our staff, Wardens and Parish Council, and all leaders across our churches – that they would lead with humility, joy, integrity and Christ-likeness. Pray for our staff retreat in August, as we seek God's wisdom for 2024. Pray for plans for The Weekender (October 21 & 22). And pray for an outpouring of God's Spirit on His church this term.

For the glory of Jesus

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Dale', with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Paul Dale

Overview

Attributes of God's Goodness

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." Exodus 34:6-7

What does God mean when He talks about His goodness? It would be daunting and humanly impossible for us to describe God, but in His kindness, in Exodus 34:6-7, we have a self-revelation of God's nature and character. It's not speculation or metaphor or imagery of what kind of God He is, it's a true revelation of his character. Exodus 34:6-7 is commonly known as a liturgical credal statement (or credo), which describes the nature and character of God, on which God's people have stood in all the different seasons of life.

Context:

The juxtaposition of God's revelation of His character next to Israel's recent 'golden calf' incident confers upon it the weight of Israel's future with God. Israel chose disobedience over loyalty to God, so God addresses their damaged relationship by this self-revelation of His character.

To quote Childs "The canonical function of Exodus 32-34, is to place the institutions of Israel's worship within a framework of sin and forgiveness".

So, God's redemption of the Israelites is not contingent on their

obedience to the law, but purely His character. This doesn't mean Israel's disobedience didn't affect their relationship with God. Moses rightly pleads for forgiveness in chapter 32, and God responds in line with His covenant promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. As God passed before Moses, He is revealing His goodness in eight particular adjectives and two statements.

Compassionate / Merciful

The Hebrew word 'compassionate' is closely linked to 'gracious' and they are often coupled together, being known as 'the compassion formula'. The root of the word compassion is 'womb' – and the womb protects and nourishes. It indicates warmth, nurture, care and comfort. Hence the concept of motherly love as a metaphor for the understanding of divine compassion.

Gracious

The Hebrew word for gracious points to God's favour. Commonly translated 'grace' or 'pity' – it carries the connotation of 'freely given without need for compensation'. God grants grace to both righteous and sinful people. God gives grace not out of response to our action of faithfulness, but out of His inherent character as a graceful and merciful God. There is a superior / inferior relationship to the giving of grace, whereby it is bestowed from one in a place of high honour to those in lower position.

Slow to anger

The expression 'slow to anger' is the idiomatic translation of two Hebrew words which mean 'long nostrils'. This implies God's anger is surpassed by God's patience. In Hebrew the nose is associated with anger, since when one is angry the nose involuntarily reddens. So, it's as if God takes long, deep breaths as He deals with sin and holds His anger in abeyance. Please note that God's patience is not the absence of anger, for a righteous, holy God is justly angered by sin and disobedience.

In fact, in the context of Exodus 32-34, there's every reason for God's anger (apostasy, golden calf etc.). Rather, God's patience outlasts or overpowers God's anger in His commitment to His people.

Abounding in steadfast love

God's strong, unwavering, committed love! It's about the loyal love between a God and the recipients of His covenant. It is sometimes translated 'loyal kindness'. "A deep, enduring, personal commitment to each other is an essential feature of situations in which one human party extends to another". This characteristic of God is declared not once, but twice in Exodus 34:6-7. It's about God's tenacious fidelity in a relationship, His resolve to be loyal in love to those He has chosen.

Abounding in faithfulness

Faithfulness is about God's firmness, certainty, truth, trustworthiness, reliability. God can be counted on to eternally act in keeping with His word and for the good of humanity.

Forgives wickedness, rebellion and sin

Forgiveness is about 'lifting or carrying of' iniquity, transgression and sin. Wickedness is the iniquity word, referring to an action that involved crooked behaviour, a deviation from the right path. Rebellion is the 'transgression' word – an overstepping of the mark, a breaking of relationship. And sin refers to 'falling short of God's standards', 'missing the way'. God Himself extends the forgiveness.

Yet does not leave the guilty unpunished (Justice)

The second section of God's self-revelation is less pleasant and desirable, with repercussions and punishments. At its root it's about God's perfect justice, where God could not be good and right without punishing evil. Sin breaks down our relationship with God. And whilst God chooses to forgive the sinner, this does not mean lack of consequences.

Other Scriptures where the Exodus 34:6-7 credal statement is found:

- a. Numbers 14:18 - Israel again rebels, with Moses interceding for them. Moses counts on God being faithful to His divine name.
- b. Joel 2:13 - In this passage, the credo is slightly altered (e.g. 'and relents from punishing'). It is used as a statement of faith for Israel to hear a warning and a call to repentance. This is the pivotal point in Joel where the mood shifts from judgement to hope.
- c. Jonah 4:2 - God has acted in favour of the Ninevites and Jonah is furious. The people of Nineveh repented, and God acted in accordance with His nature. For Jonah, God's decision is appalling. This is an important use of the credo statement, because it reveals God's character is not just toward the Israelites, but for all people.
- d. Psalms
Psalm 86:5, 15 - The Psalmist is crying out to God in the second person lament, calling on God to be faithful to His character.
Psalm 103:8, 17 - This Psalm affirms God's goodness and mercy, with the Psalmist drawing on Exodus 34:6-7 for strength as he declares in worship the faithfulness of God.
Psalm 145 – This is an acrostic poem, with verse 8 revealing how this credal statement was used by Israel. The statement, placed in the middle of the Psalm, is the basis for the praise of the entire Psalm.
- e. Nehemiah 9:17 - The people have gathered to make corporate confession of sin and to worship YHWH. The passage recounts the deeds of God in Israel's history, with the credal declaration proclaiming YHWH's character.

There are of course many other places in the Old Testament where the

Exodus 34:6-7 statement can be found, often just cited in part or briefly referred to. This is important, because it is not necessary to quote it in its entirety.

This is obviously not an exhaustive list of God's character, and it is quite different from the 'attributes of God' (such as His Omnipotence, Omnipresence, Omniscience etc.). But as we Gaze at God's Goodness by unpacking these 2 verses, our prayer is that God would:

'fill us with the knowledge of his will through all wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that we may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that we may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father.' Colossians 1: 9-12

“God’s compassion flows out of his goodness and goodness without justice is not goodness. God spares us because he is good, but he could not be good if he were not just.” A.W. Tozer

Sermon 1: God is Compassionate

Sunday 16th July

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Hosea 11:1-11

Tuesday: Lamentations 3:22-24

Wednesday: Matthew 9:35-38

Thursday: Luke 15:11-31

Friday: Matthew 11:28-30

Contemplation:

Our hearts tend to rebel against what our heads know. When have you recently felt like God is frustrated or disappointed in you? How does God's affection for you change that script?

Sermon 2: God is Gracious

Sunday 23rd July

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Joel 2:12-32

Tuesday: John 1:1-18

Wednesday: 2 Timothy 1:6-14

Thursday: Ephesians 2:1-10

Friday: Hebrews 4:14-16

Contemplation:

God's grace is clear in salvation, but is no less present in our everyday lives. Slowly look over your last month: how has God shown you grace, mercy, or undeserved kindness?

Sermon 3:
God is Slow to Anger
(Patient)

Sunday 30th July

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Nehemiah 9:1-37

Tuesday: Isaiah 30:18

Wednesday: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Thursday: Philippians 1:3-6

Friday: 2 Peter 3:1-17

Contemplation:

Consider recent moments when you've wandered, sinned, or forgotten God. Did God give up on you? Have you been abandoned by God?

Remember His patience.

Sermon 4:

God is Abounding in Love

Sunday 6th August

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Psalm 63:1-11

Tuesday: Psalm 103:1-22

Wednesday: Ephesians 3:14-21

Thursday: 1 John 4:7-20

Friday: Romans 8:31-38

Contemplation:

Do you consider yourself worthy of God? And yet, He loves you. He will always love you. Stop. Breathe. Spend a few minutes simply resting in His love for you.

Sermon 5: God is Abounding in Faithfulness

Sunday 13th August

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Micah 7:14-20

Tuesday: 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5

Wednesday: 1 John 1:1-7

Thursday: John 6:35-40

Friday: Matthew 6:25-34

Contemplation:

It can be hard to trust. We like control. But the future is not ours to determine. What do you need to give over into the hands of your unfailingly faithful God?

Sermon 6:
God is Forgiving
Sunday 20th August

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Numbers 21:4-9

Tuesday: John 3:1-21

Wednesday: Isaiah 53:1-12

Thursday: Psalm 51:1-19

Friday: 1 John 1:8 - 2:1

Contemplation:

Do you have baggage in your past? Are you carrying any burdens of your brokenness? Is sin weighing you down? Close your eyes, picture yourself walking to the foot of Jesus' cross, and leave it all with Him.

Sermon 7:

God is Just

Sunday 27th August

For this week...

Bible readings:

Monday: Matthew 25:31-46

Tuesday: Psalm 2:1-12

Wednesday: Isaiah 42:1-4

Thursday: Isaiah 66:1-24

Friday: Revelation 20:1 - 21:8

Contemplation:

Theft, betrayal, lies, murder, disappointment, slavery, war, hurt, poverty, abuse. You've experienced it, and the world is full of it. Imagine, what it will be like for God to deal with all injustice?

Connect Group Study 1:

God is Compassionate

rachūm: to love tenderly, often as a mother towards her children.

Compassion is not just an attribute describing who God is, but how God feels about us. His attitude towards us is that of a mother looking upon her beloved child.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Matthew 11:28-30

How have you experienced compassion from people in your life?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the compassion of God. Come up with your best definition of God's compassion.

Do you feel a mismatch between the OT and NT in terms of God's compassion? How do we reconcile any apparent inconsistencies?

'The emotion which we should naturally expect to find most frequently attributed to Jesus, whose whole life was a mission of mercy... is no doubt compassion.' B.B. Warfield

What does compassion look like in the life of Jesus? How is Jesus compassionate towards us even now?

How does God's compassion manifest itself to those who don't have faith in Him? Is His compassion still for them?

When you sin or wander from God, how do you think God feels about you?

Take a moment to jot some thoughts down for yourself. How could knowing God's compassion change your everyday?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Connect Group Study 2:

God is Gracious

chanūn: a word of graciousness, mercy. Kindness towards another that is undeserved.

The graciousness of God is the outworking of His compassion to treat us in a way that we do not deserve. This is God's mercy toward us as broken people.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and John 1:1-18

How have you ever experienced undeserved kindness in your life?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the graciousness of God. Come up with your best definition of God's graciousness.

Jesus was full of grace and truth (John 1:14). How does He embody grace in His life and ministry? How does He offer grace today?

How do we make sense of the God of grace when we're struggling to see His kindness in our lives? When the waves threaten to overwhelm us?

Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What does His 'grace to help us in our time of need' look like?

God is gracious, merciful, and undeservingly kind to us. He calls us to live the same way (2 Timothy 2:24, Colossians 3:12). What does a grace-filled life look like today?

Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. How do you need to rest in the graciousness of God today?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Connect Group Study 3:

God is Patient

erek apayim: lit. 'long of nostrils', a physical image for the long process of exhaling out one's embodied temper, 'slow to anger'.

The patience of God is self-evident to anyone with eyes to see the injustice of the world at large, and the brokenness embodied in the human condition. He holds back His wrath out of His compassion and graciousness toward us.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and 2 Peter 3:1-17

Share any stories of people in your life who embody patience. What do you admire most about patient people?

When is it easy to be patient? Hard to be patient?

Does God find it easy/hard to be patient? Or is He simply, just, patient?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the patience of God. Come up with your best definition of God's patience.

How is God's patience evident in the world? How do we experience the patience of God?

God is patient, allowing time for people to come and find life and forgiveness in Jesus. How is His patience experienced in the Christian life?

How does Jesus display patience in His life and ministry? How should that shape our lives as His followers?

Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. What comfort does knowing the patience of God bring to your life right now?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Connect Group Study 4:

God is Abounding in Love

hesed: 'The Hebrew *hesed* cannot be translated in one English word. This is a covenant term, wrapping up in itself all the positive attributes of God' (Daniel Block).

This characteristic of God is a smorgasbord or feast of His Divine Love acted out upon every page of Scripture. Translational attempts: 'steadfast love'; 'unfailing love'; 'covenantal loyalty'.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Romans 8:31-38

Do you have any stories from your life of people who embody a 'loyal, faithful, jealous love'? (your dog definitely counts).

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the *hesed* (pronounced with phlegm) of God. Come up with your best definition of God's love.

How does Jesus embody this *hesed* love of God? (of course start at 'He died for us', but then paddle into deeper territory).

Do you ever doubt that God loves you? What keeps you from living/ believing in the love of God in your life?

How do we experience the love of God in the day-to-day Christian life? How should knowing the love of God shape how we think about ourselves?

Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. If you lived completely from the love of God, how would your life be different?

Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 for one another.

Connect Group Study 5:

God is Abounding in Faithfulness

emet: a word of lived out truth. The trustworthiness of God's character.

We rejoice in all of this beauty in God, because we can wholly and completely depend upon every word He has spoken and action He has taken. He will never abandon us and will always follow through.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Lamentations 3:22-24

How have you experienced trustworthy people? What about untrustworthy people?

What does the trustworthiness or faithfulness of God mean to you?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the faithfulness of God. Come up with your best definition of God's faithfulness.

How does Jesus embody the faithfulness of God in Himself?

How have you experienced the trustworthiness or faithfulness of God? Have there been specific instances where you've had to depend on Him?

Have you ever experienced doubt in the trustworthiness of God? Or even the reality of God? How do you process those moments?

'We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.' Hebrews 6:19. Ultimately, God's faithfulness is the foundation of our hope. Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. How do you anchor yourself in the hope of Christ?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Connect Group Study 6:

God is Forgiving

God forgives (*nasa*, lit. lifts, carries, or takes away) wickedness (*avon*, a general word for bad human behaviour), rebellion (*pasha*, legal word concerning transgression of law), and sin (*hattaah*, more familiar concept of sin 'missing the mark').

Forgiveness is hard when you are the one doing the forgiving, and seemingly easy when you are the one receiving. The human experience is to be on both ends of the process at one point or another. Yet God never needs forgiveness, and at the heart of the gospel offers forgiveness to all.

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Matthew 18:21-35

Have you ever had to forgive or be forgiven something significant? How did it feel? What was the process like?

Many Christians wrestle with the feeling that the God of Forgiveness enters the stage in the NT with Jesus, while the OT is primarily a God of Justice and Judgment. How do we make sense of this apparent divide?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the forgiveness of God. Come up with your best definition of God's forgiveness.

How does Jesus teach about forgiveness? Embody forgiveness in His life? Offer forgiveness today?

Is forgiveness from God conditional or unconditional? What does Jesus mean in the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:12) when he says 'forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors'?

There seems to be two extremes when it comes to forgiveness: taking forgiveness as a given, to finding it hard to believe you are forgiven at all. Where do you sit?

Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. How do you need to receive or believe the forgiveness of God in your life?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Connect Group Study 7:

God is Just

pt 1: (uncomfortable but okay) 'he does not leave the guilty unpunished.'

pt 2 (less and less comfortable): 'he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.'

Read Exodus 34:6-7 and Revelation 20:1 - 21:8

Have you ever cried out for justice? Are you longing for justice in any ways right now?

For some people the justice of God can sound offensive, while for others the justice of God is incredibly comforting. How can there be such a breadth of experience?

Spend 5-10 minutes sharing passages that come to mind, both OT and NT, that help illuminate the justice of God. Come up with your best definition of God's justice.

How do we make sense of Exodus 34:6-7, and the idea of punishing children? Doesn't that sound like the furthest thing from true justice?

On the one hand, we have assurance and forgiveness in Christ. On the other hand, churches are warned to wake up, remember their first love, and be earnest and repent (Revelation 3). How should the Christian think/feel about justice?

How does justice and forgiveness perfectly meet in the person of Jesus? What will perfect justice look like when it's fulfilled?

Take a moment to jot down some thoughts for yourself. How does God's justice comfort and/or shake you?

Pray where God has been leading you.

Personal Reflection

Following our series

How has our series on the attributes of God's goodness changed your view of:

- God: Father, Son & Spirit?
- Yourself?
- The world in which we live?

How could our series on the attributes of God's goodness help you to see and show God's goodness?

What is one area you have changed in your thinking or actions, because of this series?

What is one question that you still have?

Additional Notes:

Giving at Church

As we study God's Goodness this term, let us reflect on the many ways in which God has been good, gracious and generous to us. In response to this, how might we show goodness, graciousness and generosity to others? Did you know that the generosity of our ten congregations across the three sites of Kirribilli, Neutral Bay and Macquarie Park, generates nearly all of our income?

Did you also know that we are blessed with a gifted, dedicated, and loving Ministry Team to lead our ever-growing church? We have ministries in our local communities – through scripture in schools and kids, youth and young adult ministries tailored to support our younger members through their spiritual journey, as well as the support provided to our mission partners doing gospel work around the world. We have outreach into the Greenway Community, and our local aged-care homes and Everyday English to help those from overseas improve their English and understand the Bible. All that, alongside many other events in the life of our church, demonstrate the Goodness of God across the lower north shore and beyond.

It is with your continued support that we can continue to grow as a church and reach more people to share the gospel. If you don't yet give to this work and would like to, we'd encourage you to consider giving electronically using the details below or to talk to any of the staff team to find out more.

We thank you for your continued and intentional generous giving.

You can give by using our bank account details or the QR code below, or head to our website for more details, including the option to give by credit card - thebridgechurch.org.au/give.

Bank Account details
The Bridge Church
BSB: 032-099
Account number: 637189





The Bridge Church