

Who God Is - Matthew 18 & Genesis 4:19-24

INTRODUCTION

God's character has always remained constant throughout all of human history. Ages have come and gone, people have changed, and they have tried to place that change upon God. Our great God has always been a God of not only justice, but of righteousness, forgiveness, grace and hope.

DISCUSSION

A couple questions...

- How have you placed your own self ABOVE the call to forgive or reconcile with someone else?
- How have you looked down on someone else because they don't agree with you?
- How have you tried to cover your own self so the real you is someone no one ever has to see?

EXPLANATION

Why is it important that God never changes?

Why is it important to understand that we do (change)?

Have you ever thought of yourself as unforgiving? When/how?

Have you ever thought of yourself as self-righteous or self-loathing? When/how?

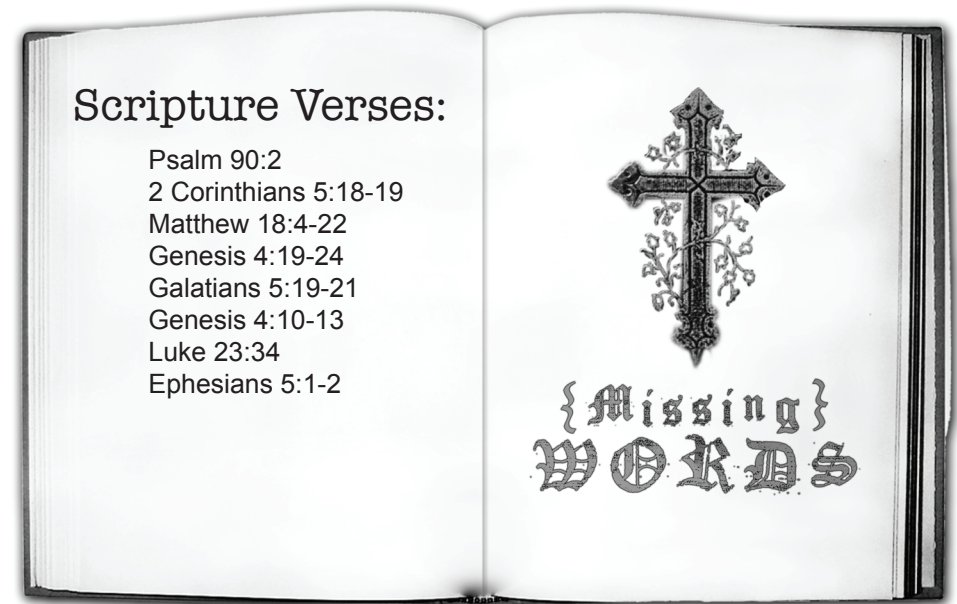
Have you ever thought of yourself as arrogant? When/how?

How often do you think about yourself as being “Reconciled” to God??

APPLICATION

How could thinking about yourself as reconciled changed how you treat and view others?

How could thinking about yourself as reconciled changed how you treat and view God?



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Week 2 Notes

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Psalm 90:2 *“Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.”*

Too often people try to make a distinction between the God of the old Testament and say he is different from the god of the New Testament. Many believe that the Old Testament God is mean, wrathful, vengeful, and angry...but the God of the New Testament is happy, loving, forgiving, and offers hope. The truth is God has never changed, He has always been the same and always will be. He has been forgiving throughout all of history (and He hates sin just as much as He has ever hated sin).

God has a plan from the foundation of the earth to bring His children out of slavery and into freedom, hope, and joy in order to bring Him glory. God's glory results in the good of mankind. The closest we could come to viewing the world as God sees it is when we understand children. A child does not see skin color, they do not see separation by socio-economic status, they don't know the difference between ugly and a cultural standard of beauty. God sees the world like a child: without bias.

In Matthew 18 Jesus says that those who can welcome “a little child like this *in my name*” welcomes Him. In context, this is not welcoming literal children (although it could be), but it is welcoming “children” defined by this section of scripture as those who humble themselves to become like children - the Children of God.

THIS IS Humility and greatness, because true humility brings true greatness.

Jesus spends the remainder of the passage talking about forgiveness and reconciliation. He shows that this is what God has been about since the fall of mankind. But Peter has a question in Matthew 18:21, it's the same question we all have when someone continues to wrong us: HOW MANY TIMES DO I NEED TO FORGIVE SOMEONE WHEN THEY WRONG ME? *Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

Forgiveness and reconciliation are not approval of SIN. Many people wonder, like Peter, if we forgive in this way won't that make people want to take advantage of us and our generosity on offering forgiveness? Peter sums up all of us: When we sin we want to be forgiven, if we aren't we get mad and think people are being cruel...

BUT when others sin against us we think we are vindicated on holding a grudge... Jesus tells us that we aren't.

Part of our problem is that we know we are to be like God, but we don't like this because we don't really trust God to take care of our problems (OR US).

Genesis 4

Early in the book of Genesis you meet a guy named Lamech. **4:19 Lamech married two women, one named Adah and the other Zillah.** This is the first recorded instance of polygamy in the Bible. Lamech, like us, is always in search of “more” so he can become more important; more removed; more self-sufficient, he believes he doesn't need to offer forgiveness or reconciliation to anyone.

One day Lamech gets insulted by a young man and ends up killing him for it. Lamech then sings this song,

“Adah and Zillah, listen to me; wives of Lamech, hear my words.

I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me

Then Lamech boasts of NO RESTRAINT in exacting his revenge....

If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.

This is the picture Jesus gives Peter when Peter asks how many times do I have to forgive someone. Jesus essentially says “you are not God, Peter...that decision is not yours...so you are to forgive always, constantly offering reconciliation...because if you don't you could end up like Lamech.”

And Jesus wants us to be like HIM.

