

IN[↑] NEXT LEVEL

Portraits of God from the Pentateuch
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PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 1: A God who Creates

Notes from Teaching Video

Descriptions of God

The Pentateuch = Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy

Gods who Act

A God who “creates”

Genesis 1

Days of Creation

Genesis 2 and on...

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Look up the following texts, all of which use the Hebrew word bara', "to create": Exod 34:10; Num 16:30; Deut 4:32; Isa 4:5; 40:26, 28; 41:20; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7-8; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17-18; Ps 51:12; 102:19; 104:30; 148:5; Eccl 12:1. What types of things does God bara' in the Old Testament?
2. Why is it significant for us to understand God as Creator?
3. What do you think about God creating in light of humanity's choice to sin? What do you think about God creating again out of man's chaos?
4. Spend some time praying, thanking God for the various things he has created.

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 2: A God who Blesses

Notes from Teaching Video

Genesis 11

Understanding the context...

Verses 1-3

Verse 4: a ziggurat

The Purpose of the Tower

Verses 5-7

A Divine Reversal

Genesis 12-22

Abram's Call

Life after the Call

How God Blesses

The Ultimate Reversal of Babel

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. We don't often think of God as one who refuses to bless. Why did God not bless the people at Babel? What are your thoughts about this? How does it reshape your view of God and his interaction in our lives?
2. Compare how Christians use the word "blessed" today with how it is used here in Genesis. Is it used correctly? How would you redefine it after tracing the word here in Genesis?
3. It's powerful to think that the Holy Spirit coming in the book of Acts "undoes" what the people did at Babel. How many years passed before that happened? In light of our comparatively short lifespan throughout eternity, does this reshape your view of God and how / when He acts? How?
4. In light of your thoughts on the previous question, what would be your answer to someone who says that God is silent or absent from certain evils that happen in the world?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 3: A God who is With Me

Notes from Teaching Video

The Story of Isaac

The Story of Jacob

Jacob's Family Dysfunction

Jacob's Sons

Judah's Transformation

Joseph's Transformation

God's Presence

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. If you grew up in church, compare the dysfunction of the family of God with the lessons you learned about these characters in Sunday School. Which seems more true to life?
2. How does imadi - "God with me" - in the midst of the dysfunction of the family of God as seen here apply to our own lives today?
3. At the end of the video, reference was made to Psalm 23. Read the passage aloud and talk about what God's presence means for your daily life.

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 4: A God who Knows

Notes from Teaching Video

Exodus 1

Notice the connections to Genesis

A Change in Power

Exodus 2

The Birth of God's Chosen Redeemer

Exodus 3-4

The Bush on Fire

The Theme of God's Presence

A God who Knows

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Does it ever frustrate you that God doesn't step in and fix problems in the world?
2. Are you surprised that God let the people suffer for so long in Exodus before he acted? Do you think the people thought Yahweh had forgotten them?
3. Do you think people today struggle to believe that God knows? Do you? How would it change your life today if you believed, with all of your heart, that this is part of God's character?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 5: A God who Fights

Notes from Teaching Video

Exodus 5

"Who is the Lord?" is quite different than "I am."

This reinforces the very Biblical concept that following God often results in our suffering.

Verse 18: "go, work" is the exact phrase said by Pharaoh in Exodus 10:8, 10:24, and 12:31.

Exodus 6

Have you ever been unable to see hope because of the depths of your despair?

Exodus 7-13: The Ten Plagues

Exodus 14-15

God will use this to trap Pharaoh unexpectedly.

Once reality hits, the people panic. They can't see God's perspective, and it gets them into trouble.

The Lord will win the battle.

No longer will the Egyptians be able to say, "who is the Lord?"

The Song of Moses and Miriam

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. We don't typically talk about God as a warrior. How do these texts impact your view of God?

2. Included below is a chart that mentions all the places "hardening of the heart" is mentioned in Exodus 1-15. Take some time as a group to work through the handout, circling who does the hardening in each case.

3. Looking at the way that Exodus describes the hardness of Pharaoh's heart, think about these questions: How would you respond to someone who said that Pharaoh never had a choice? How would you respond to someone who said that Pharaoh always had a choice?

The Hardening of Pharaoh's Heart

Verse	Plague	Hebrew Word	Hebrew Stem	Sense of the Hebrew Word	Who seems to "harden"?
4.21	-	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
7.3	-	קשה (<i>qsh</i>)	Hiphil	to make obstinate	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
7.13	-	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Qal	to act with determination	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
7.14	-	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Adjective	dull, unresponsive	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
7.22	1	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Qal	to act with determination	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
8.15	2	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Hiphil	to make dull, unresponsive	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
8.19	3	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Qal	to act with determination	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
8.32	4	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Hiphil	to make dull, unresponsive	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
9.7	5	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Qal	to be heavy, dull	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
9.12	6	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
9.34	7	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Hiphil	to make dull, unresponsive	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
9.35	7	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Qal	to act with determination	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
10.1	8	כבד (<i>kbd</i>)	Hiphil	to make dull, unresponsive	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
10.20	8	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
10.27	9	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
11.10	10	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
14.4	-	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
14.8	-	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Pharaoh / Unclear
14.17	-	חזק (<i>hzzq</i>)	Piel	to make strong, firm	God / Egyptians / Unclear

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 6: A God who Saves

Notes from Teaching Video

Exodus 12

Verse 3: the word often translated as “lamb” could mean either a sheep or a goat.

Verse 11: Why did they have to eat it like this?

Verse 14: God is establishing a memorial before the actual event even occurs!

What exactly takes place in verse 23?

Verse 26: The story of their “service” is not the story of Pharaoh’s “slavery” (see Exodus 6:6, 9).

The Significance of the Passover

Exodus 12:46 —> Numbers 9:12 —> Psalm 34:20 —> John 19:36

A God who Saves

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Look up a picture of Francisco de Zurbarán's painting Agnus Dei. Agnus Dei is the Latin word for Lamb of God. Take a couple of minutes to ponder the art in front of you. What do you notice about the lamb? About the bindings? What is this picture trying to communicate about salvation?
2. Read Matthew 26:20-30. How does the Old Testament story help provide meaning or depth to the New Testament story?
3. The Passover feast is a celebration held once a year to commemorate this event. How does Christ's death and resurrection influence how we celebrate the Passover?
4. Jesus' name, in Greek and Hebrew, means "one who saves." How would you explain salvation to someone who objects, "I don't have anything I need to be saved or delivered from"?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 7: A God who is Gracious

Notes from Teaching Video

The Context of Exodus 19

The Content of Exodus 19-20

The Covenant

The Marriage Relationship

The Grace of God in the Law

The Greatest Commandments

A God who is Gracious

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Have you ever thought about the 10 Commandments, or the 10 Words, as grace and not law? How does this impact your perspective of the book of Exodus?
2. Read Matthew 22:35-40. If this is how Jesus understood the “law,” what does this say about its central message? What needs to be changed, shifted or confirmed in your understanding of the way the two testaments fit together?
3. If the 10 Commandments were written to protect everyone else’s rights, and not yours, think about how your life might be different if you started to operate this way within your community of faith. How would it change things if you were concerned with protecting other peoples’ rights instead of your own? Try to list three things you could do in the next week to practically show concern for other people within your community of faith.

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 8: A God who is Slow to Anger

Notes from Teaching Video

A God “long of nose”

The Purpose of Exodus

The Golden Calf

The Calf as an Anti-Ark

A Broken Covenant

Observations about God’s Anger

1: God’s anger is often, but not always, expressed against his own people.

2: God’s anger is logical.

3: God’s anger is measured.

4: God’s anger serves God’s ultimate redemptive purposes.

God's Anger Today

1: God gets angry when people sin.

2: The full expression of God's anger is more than we could bear.

3: God provided a way for his anger to be poured out for our sake.

4: Because of Jesus, God is no longer angry with us.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. In the Old Testament, the people were warned about stirring up God's anger. What would cause God to get angry in Deuteronomy 6:10-15? Why did this seem to matter to God?

2. The sin of going after other gods is frequently called "idolatry." Tim Keller says an idol is anything that is more important to us than God. Now think about your life...if Deuteronomy 6:10-15 was written to you, how would you be guilty of "going after other gods"? List some examples, and try to be specific.

3. Think about what Jesus has done for you as you read Isaiah 53:2-12. What does it mean that "the punishment that brought us peace was upon him" (verse 5)? If he took away your sin and bore your punishment, what does that mean for you?

4. Many times, we may feel like God is angry, disgusted or at least deeply disappointed in us. If you have accepted Jesus, how does God see you? Make a list, starting with "In God's eyes, I am..." Spend some time meditating on Galatians 4:4-6, 1 John 3:1 and 1 John 3:20.

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 9: A God who is Holy

Notes from Teaching Video

What should we do with all these laws?

The Traditional Model: Moral Laws, Ritual Laws, Civil Laws

A Suggested Approach: Seeing the Laws through Christ

Step 1: What did the law originally mean?

Step 2: What is at stake in the law?

Step 3: How does this fit into God's plan?

Step 4: How does this apply to us?

The Laws of the Pentateuch

A Case Study: Exodus 23:4

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What has the Christian Church typically done with Old Testament Law? Have we sought to interpret it? Ignored it? Taught it?
2. Look up Leviticus 19:27. In the ancient Near East, hair was considered one of the central parts of a person's essence, along with their blood. Hair and hair clippings were often used in pagan magic rituals. What's more, it was considered disgraceful culturally to selectively trim or drastically cut one's hair (see 2 Samuel 10:4 and Nehemiah 13:25). Using the four step process discussed in the video, how do you think we are to see this law in light of Christ?
3. What implications does Christ's atonement for sins and the justification of believers have for the way we read Old Testament Law?
4. How would you answer objections to the Bible from an unbeliever who cites the Old Testament Law as contradictory, oppressive, or antiquated?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 10: A God who is Jealous

Notes from Teaching Video

God as "El Qanna"

The Allure of Idolatry

The Sacrificial System

The Day of Atonement

Trusting the Process

Seeing the Sacrificial System through Jesus

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What immediately comes to mind when you think of "A God who is Jealous"? Is jealousy a good thing or a bad thing?
2. Explain in your own words how the sacrificial system helps the people stay devoted to God.
3. Consider the Day of Atonement. How does Jesus' role as High Priest compare to Aaron's role as High Priest? What are the similarities and differences? Consider Hebrews 5:1-10.
4. God's jealousy is founded in his great love for us. Do you have a hard time believing God would be jealous for your affections? How can God's jealousy for your love change your daily life today? This week? This month?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 11: A God who is Covenantally Loyal

Notes from Teaching Video

Mercy + Truth

Numbers: Testing God's Covenant Loyalty

Tracing God's Covenant Loyalty

From Israel's call...

...to the exile...

...to the cross.

God's Covenant Loyalty and Us

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do you answer the objection that the God of the NT is not the God of the OT? What texts, themes, topics, or stories would you point to? Why is it important to believe this anyway?
2. Share a story of how you once thought that you were all alone, only to find out that God had not abandoned you the whole time.

3. Psalm 137 is one the most graphic imprecatory (invoking curses or calling for judgment) Psalms in the Bible. It is the lament of an Israelite in exile in Babylon. Verses 5-6 recall the former splendor of home. All he has ever known is lost, and he is in the deepest pit of despair. How is God's loyalty revealed in a Psalm like this? What does this Psalm say about our interactions with God even in deep despair?

4. Consider Jesus' words from the cross in Matthew 27:46. Now read John 19:30. How should we think about God's loyalty to the covenant in light of Christ's death?

PORTRAITS OF GOD FROM THE PENTATEUCH

Session 12: A God who Loves

Notes from Teaching Video

Setting the Scene of Deuteronomy

A Formula for Life

Hear.

Fear.

Do.

Live.

For Future Generations

God's Love

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How does our culture's concept of love and loyalty differ from a Biblical concept of love and loyalty? Think of some ways to love as God loves in your neighborhood or workplace or family this week.

2. Walter Brueggemann says that Moses knows that the Israelites will prosper and that “prosperity breeds amnesia.” Do you think this a true statement? Why or why not? If it is true, how do you see it play out in our culture today?

3. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. The first word in this text is “hear,” or in Hebrew, “shema.” This Hebrew word means more than what we do with our ears. The word is often translated another way in the Old Testament; reading through the following passages, what other English word are the translators using to translate this Hebrew word? Genesis 26:5, 27:8; Exodus 5:2, 23:22; Numbers 27:20; Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 24:24; Judges 3:4; 1 Samuel 15:22. What seems to be the theme in these verses? How does this impact our understanding of Deuteronomy 6:4-9?

4. What does Hear - Fear - Do - Live look like in your context?

5. How have these studies changed your perspective about God?



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A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset over a body of water, holding a fishing rod. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow. Trees and reeds are visible in the foreground and background.

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