

God Doesn't Ghost | Exodus 34:6 Sermon Discussion

Purpose of Discussion: To identify practical steps to help us deepen our understanding of God's unfailing love and commitment to his people.

Sermon Refresher: We've been learning the last several weeks about the ways in which God is revealing his character to us through his name. By sharing His name with us, God is inviting us to enter into a deeper relationship with Him. This week we focused on unpacking what it means that God is "abounding in love and faithfulness."

Icebreaker: Keith commented that faithfulness is something we respect in others but have a hard time living up to. Here's an opportunity to move outside your comfort zone a bit: share a time when you committed to something (a job, a project, playing a sport, helping someone move, a relationship) but did not follow through.

Transition: There's often a gap between our desire to be faithful (committed, loyal to, steadfast) to others and our lived-out reality. **A key aspect of our faith leans on the truth that God is utterly unlike us in this way.**

Discussion:

Exodus 34:6

The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness**"

Psalm 9:10

Those who know your name trust in you, for you, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek you.

1. Read Psalm 9:10. What does "knowing God's name" have to do with trust, according to the psalmist? What do you think of that?
2. Our cultural understanding of love is tied largely to feelings, which means "love" can wax or wane depending on circumstances. What are some of the consequences of our society defining love in this way?

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3. Keith explained this morning how the words “love” and “faithfulness” build on each other to more clearly articulate the strength and devotion of God’s love for us. Why is it important for us to know that God’s love is intricately tied to his faithfulness?
4. The term “ghosting” refers to the practice of ending a relationship with someone by suddenly withdrawing from all communication, without explanation. Keith said that God never ghosts us. He doesn’t leave. But there are times in our lives when it feels like He has. What circumstances make you question or fear that God might abandon you?

Digging Deeper: Why did you feel abandoned? Did you believe your own shortcomings caused God to turn away? Or do you see ways in which you are believing that God’s faithfulness should equal a life devoid of serious suffering? How does our perception of our own situation conflict with what Scripture tells us?

John 16:33

³³ “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. **In this world you will have trouble.** But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

5. Take a few minutes to read the following verses and identify the different ways in which these truths speak to God’s faithfulness. What about God helps us trust Him in hard times?

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

² Serve the LORD with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

³ Know that the LORD, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;^[a]
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the LORD is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

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Psalm 25:8-10

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.

⁹ He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.

¹⁰ All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Nehemiah 9:16-19

¹⁶ "But they and our fathers acted presumptuously and stiffened their neck and did not obey your commandments. ¹⁷ They refused to obey and were not mindful of the wonders that you performed among them, but they stiffened their neck and appointed a leader to return to their slavery in Egypt. ¹⁸ But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and did not forsake them. ¹⁹ Even when they had made for themselves a golden calf and said, 'This is your God who brought you up out of Egypt,' and had committed great blasphemies, you in your great mercies did not forsake them in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud to lead them in the way did not depart from them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night to light for them the way by which they should go.

Psalm 86:14-16

¹⁴ O God, insolent men have risen up against me;
a band of ruthless men seeks my life,
and they do not set you before them.

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

¹⁶ Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant,
and save the son of your maidservant.

2 Timothy 2:13

¹³ if we are faithless, he remains faithful — for he cannot deny himself.

6. How can we fight to believe these truths when it is hard? What can we practically do to remind us of these truths?

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Sharing and Prayer:

Encourage your group to look for areas in their lives that are hard, or perhaps where they have not allowed God's presence to change their perspective on the situation. Spend time expressing gratitude for God's loving faithfulness in the midst of those situations, and asking Him to give us a deeper understanding of his devoted commitment to us through hard times, so we can in turn live out his love to others despite our circumstances.