

Who is God

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[0 : 0 0] All right, am I on? What up, One Harbor? How are you? Good? All right, good to see you. Thanks so much for coming out to see a lot of familiar faces, a lot of new faces, and we can't be more happy that you're here with us.

And especially on this day, it's our kind of first big Sunday, our first Sunday to meet, and man, we're so excited. Again, my name is Jesse. I'm one of the pastors and just privileged to be able to be up here and teach from God's Word this morning.

If you have a Bible, you can go ahead and open to Genesis 1. If you don't have one, don't worry about it. We're going to have the verses up on the screen here, and you could follow along with us.

So kind of what coincides with us starting as a site, we're also starting a new series. It's a short series, and we're looking at what are the foundations of our Christian belief?

What are some of the essential doctrines? What are the essential teachings that we're meant to hold on to? And we base this series on the Apostles' Creed, and the Apostles' Creed is one of the oldest statements of faith that have existed, that the church has agreed and held on to, and it's been for thousands of years.

[1 : 1 4] And it's developed and used by the early church, and it's still in use today. By many, many churches. So let's read that together. It says this, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to hell. The third day, he rose again from the dead. He ascended to heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there, he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

So, just one little thing, because many of you, or maybe some of you, might be confused by this. The Holy Catholic Church. Are we talking about a denomination? Are we talking about the Roman Catholic Church?

[2 : 2 1] And no, Catholic, that word Catholic literally just means universal. It's not referring to a particular sect of Christianity, denomination of Christianity. It's referring to all Christians all time, for all time, who have believed in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and have been brought into the body of Christ by that.

Okay. So, when you read, when we read this creed, it's important to realize every single line is basically the gospel distilled into short, memorable statements.

And while each statement is a gateway into the truth of the gospel, by no means is at the end point, right? Actually, what it is, it's the first step on our journey, on your journey, my journey, into infinity.

Discovering the richness of who God is and what he's done. And you'll find, and I hope we find, as we go through this series, that for yourself personally, maybe in your own time, and on Sundays, as we dig into these truths, we're going to find that there is actually no limit to the treasures we find as we pursue the knowledge of the Holy One.

My hope in this series is that you and I, we're going to acquire a taste for the infinite glory, majesty, and love of God. And out of this renewed awe and wonder of seeing his greatness and seeing his goodness, that we're going to pursue knowing him.

[3 : 45] We're going to desire to pursue knowing him. Not so that we can amass more information and be conceited know-it-alls, but actually we want to pursue the knowledge of God. We want to get the knowledge of God.

We want to know who he is so that we respond in worship, right? There's this phrase that theology, the study of God, should lead to doxology, the worship of God, right?

So that's what this is about, and I hope that is what we see, that is what happens as we go through this series. So over the next four weeks, we're going to be looking at four key doctrines central to the Christian faith. Who is God the Father?

Who is God the Son? Who is God the Holy Spirit? And what is the church? Now, you probably noticed that I mentioned God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And if you're here and you're new to Christianity, maybe you're exploring this, this idea of like God being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you might be thinking, okay, Jesse, which is it? You know, he can only be one.

[4 : 41] He can't be all at the same time. Can you please make up your mind? And so admittedly, I just want to say from the get-go, man, this is a hard thing to explain. It's a bit of a mystery, but here's the thing.

And Christians believe that God is one God, but he's three distinct persons. The fancy word for that is called the Trinity. You may have heard that before. Now, I realize, again, if you're new and you're exploring Christianity, or maybe you just hadn't heard of this before, this might sound like sci-fi loony bin stuff, right?

Like, okay, Jess, you just said he's one, and yet he's three distinct persons. You don't get to have it both ways. But that's exactly what we believe as Christians. Our God is three persons, and yet he is one God.

And here's the thing. It actually, knowing God this way and believing this proves his character as we explore who he is. Because if he's a God that's one God and yet three distinct persons, it makes us know this about who God is.

He is a God of covenant relationship. He is a God of unbreaking relationship. And he has existed eternally this way. He's existed forever as this community of love, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who've loved one another unceasingly, who've enjoyed one another, who've gloried in one another for all time.

[5 : 59] There's been no fighting. There's been no prejudice. There's been no pride. There's been no jealousy in the Trinity. There never has been, and there never will be. So, he's a God.

He is a God who exists in relationship. And he's a God that exists for relationship. And it is why God calls himself both Father and Son. They're words that we get.

He communicates himself to us in ways we can understand. Father and Son, those are relationship words. And today, we're going to specifically focus on God the Father.

And just a reminder that the Creed says this, I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. So, what does that mean for us?

Well, here's the thing. If you're a human, if you're alive and you're breathing, like me, there's two fundamental desires we all share. It's to be loved and to be significant, to have purpose.

[6 : 58] Right? And we all go through life wanting to know those things and wanting to experience those things. We want to know that our lives count for something. And we want to be cherished and loved and valued.

So, what does that have to do with God the Father? And what I hope today is that as we look at him, we're going to find out it has everything to do with God the Father.

Knowing God the Father gives us a greater identity. So, whether you're here and you're a Christian or not, it's no big deal. All of us are on this journey of self-discovery. From the time we were born, we're trying to find out who we are and how we're meant to live.

All of us are trying to answer the question, who am I and why do I exist? And along the way, we realize and we're taught from our cultural moment. There's many theories and labels that have been amassed over time to try to tell us who we are.

And socialists and people and clever guys out there, we lump people into categories based on varieties of data. You're a Gen Xer, you're a Gen Yer, or you're a millennial, or you're a boomer, or you're a hipster, or you're middle-aged.

[8 : 09] Right? And so, we have these labels that get slapped on us, and after a while, we start to look like a NASCAR driver's jump seat with a bunch of identity labels stuck on us like this, right?

But this search for identity, man, all these labels that get stuck on us, it doesn't yield peace within ourselves and with others. All the different labels, often what they do is they splinter our soul inside of us, and it segregates us from each other is actually what happens.

And these labels, they come with baggage, right? And they come with gradations of value. Some labels, man, we boast in. Some labels, we want, man, we hope are prominent and everybody could see them.

Man, I want everyone to know that about me. That's who I am. But then there's other labels. Other labels that we're ashamed of. There's other labels that we want to hide, and we hope nobody realizes that about us.

We cover them because we're ashamed. But we struggle inwardly. We struggle inwardly. Does this label define me, or does this label define me?

[9 : 23] There's no peace within our souls. We're disoriented inside. We become insecure. We lack confidence. We don't know who we are. And who we're meant to be.

So, again, I'm going to ask the question, how does knowing God help with this? Right? How is knowing God as our Father help with this? I had a friend, Rob Mesa, and he didn't know his dad until he was 30 years old.

Strong guy. Really confident guy. But he had this desire to know his dad, and finally he connected with him at 30. And I used to ask him, I was like, man, how's it been, like, you know, getting to know your dad?

And he's like, Jess, this is such a trip. There are so many things that I do that I now understand I do. Like, I was just, I was laying on the couch the other day with him, and we were both just sitting there, and I realized he does this thing with his arm when he's just chilling out.

And he's like, I've always done that. Like, as a kid, I was like, our body position. And so what's funny is what he discovered is in so many ways he mimicked his dad, who he never knew.

[10 : 31] He mimicked him. And he didn't know why he did the things he did until he came into contact with his father, and he saw that, oh, my goodness, my father passed down stuff to me that I didn't even realize.

And it was actually a joy to him to know those things. And if you think about it, orphans or kids that are adopted, as they get older, they have this desire to want to know their parents.

And for some to be able to meet their parents, it's a huge deal for them because they're after that answer to that question, man, who am I? Maybe if I could meet them, this is going to explain to me more of who I am.

And so if God is our father, then knowing him more is learning who I really am.

Knowing him more is learning who you and I really are. It's not just one piece of our identity. It's the greatest identity that we could have. It gets us back to that one significant identity, children of God.

[11 : 30] And picturing that NASCAR suit again, man, all those labels being torn off, not being confused, am I this label or am I that label? But just having one big slapped-on label that says child of God, child of a heavenly father.

No more confusion. No more turmoil in our soul, but peace and confidence. Only one identity matters, son, daughter of God, which means that God is our father.

So, who is this God the father? What is he like? And this should be one of our highest pursuits, to find out who is my father.

And much like my friend Rob needed to find it out, we need to find it out for ourselves. So, let's look into who God the father is. Again, back to Genesis 1.1. It says this, verse 1.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

[12 : 33] And God said, let there be light. And there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness. Then God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness.

And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So, God created man in his own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Man and female, he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God said, behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And every beast of the earth, and every bird of the heavens, and everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made.

[13 : 38] And behold, it was very good. So, how does God the Father introduce himself to us? Right from the beginning of Scripture, he wants to know himself as God the Father who gives life.

God the Father gives us life. I mean, what predicates being a dad? What predicates being a father? Is the ability to make life. And God isn't just any old father.

He's an almighty father. He's an all-powerful father. He made everything. And he didn't do it by taking what already existed and kind of forming and fashioning it like a sculptor does.

No. He actually spoke it into existence. There was nothing. And by the word of his mouth, he spoke everything that is into being.

Genesis 1.1. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And if God did this, if God spoke everything into being before there was anything, man, then nothing short of calling him almighty Father would be honest.

[14 : 45] And he is almighty. He has infinite power. But God is just not infinite in power. He's actually infinite in all that he is. A.W. Tozer wrote an excellent book on the attributes of God.

And in it, he says this. God is infinite. That's the hardest thought I will ask you to grasp. You cannot understand what infinite means.

But don't let it bother you. I don't understand it. And I'm trying to explain it. Infinite means so much that nobody can grasp it. But reason nevertheless kneels and acknowledges that God is infinite.

We mean by infinite that God knows no limits, no bounds, and no end. What God is, he is without boundaries. All that God is, he is without bounds or limits.

So how does God want us to know him from the get-go? As this limitless fountainhead of life. That's how he discloses himself from the beginning. Everything that exists proceeds from him.

[15 : 48] And it's not like he worked hard laboring millions and billions of years. Growing tired and having to take breaks and picking it up again. And repeating that cycle. No. He spoke and immediately it became true.

Man, we wish we had that kind of power, right? Man, to be able to speak and just make it happen. That would be awesome. Grass be mowed. And it is mowed. Children obey.

And they obey, right? Man, I wish that would happen in my house, but it doesn't. But that's the thing. God isn't us. We're limited in power.

He's not limited in power. He is so much greater than us. He's more powerful than we could possibly fathom. Someone with this kind of power, right?

Someone with that kind of power that we're talking about with God here. Man, that's somebody that we should fear. Someone like that should be approached with reverence and awe. And it's no surprise in that when Jesus taught us how to pray to the Father, when he was teaching his disciples, he said, start this way.

[16 : 53] Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. And he's saying, man, recognize your Father in heaven is this almighty God to be feared and come to him with reverence. Hallow your name.

I want to fear your name. I want to revere your name. I want to see your name as great. So much greater than myself. And in one sense, you know, there's a very healthy fear of God that we should have.

There's a very healthy fear of God the Father who's all-powerful that we should have. He is able to speak and make everything from grass to galaxies. Yeah, it would be wise if we feared him.

But is that all the relationship that God the Father wants with us, right? I mean, are we simply just to fear him, approaching him with trembling, scared for our lives all the time?

I mean, is he a Father that can be trusted with all this power? Or is he going to be going around smiting us, you know? Some of us think of this God as God the big smiter. He's this Father in heaven who sits with a scowl on his face, looking at us with disdain and disappointment, wanting to punish and judge us for all the mistakes we make.

[18 : 03] All these questions begin to start running through our mind. Man, if all that power belongs to God, actually, that might not be good news at all. Maybe we think of that where it's like, man, all that power in one person, that's not a good thing.

I mean, power corrupts, and ultimate power corrupts. Ultimately, this isn't a good thing. This could be really, really dangerous. And maybe that's because we've experienced bad dads.

Maybe we grew up with bad dads or really bad authority figures who abuse their power. You might be here today having sat under that kind of authority with the physical and emotional scars, actually, because of that.

The thought of God the Father being almighty doesn't make us want to approach him with reverence, but actually to run from him in fear. But God doesn't just show himself.

God doesn't show himself as an almighty father that gave us life. He also shows us he's a good father that we can trust. Every time God created something, he blessed it.

[19 : 08] See, the progression we see in creation of God creating things is this. He said, God said, let there be dot, dot, dot. And then it said there was, you know, whatever he said, let there be, it came into being.

But then he goes on to say, God looks at it. He goes on to say this. He looks at it and then he declares it good. And he looks at what he created and he declares it good.

And what's God doing? Is he just giving himself a pat on the back? Is he like the king of backhand and compliments? Is that what's happening here? No, not at all. What he is doing is he is assigning value and significance to his creation.

He's blessing it. And what does this show us? It shows us that God the Father gives us his love. It's important to realize what God was doing when he looked at what he created and said it is good.

Those three little words, it is good. It's so easy to just pass on by them and be like, oh, cool. That's awesome. God liked what he created. Man, we have to remember that he's, yes, he's infinitely powerful and to be feared, but he's infinitely good and loving.

[20 : 18] And therefore, he can be trusted. Here's the thing about God's goodness and love. He doesn't give it based on merit. We don't see this in this creation account.

And actually, this is the storyline of the Bible. He gives it by his own choice. He gives it out of grace. He didn't wait for his creation to prove its love to him and to pledge their allegiance to him.

Man, what he does is actually before they could even do anything, before we could do anything, he pours out his love and his goodness first. His words of blessing were spoken over us before we lifted a finger.

He was saying how pleased he was with us. He was saying how much love and joy he had for what he had created. And again, this is another way God gives us life.

It's not just a life that gives, it's not just giving us existence. It's actually speaking words of life over us that give life to us in fullness of life.

[21 : 22] He's letting us learn the language of covenant relationship that his creation was meant to be brought into. Right? Remember, God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they had been saying these things over themselves for all eternity.

And then he creates and he begins to teach what he made. This beautiful language of love and joy. And so these words that God speaks over us, they give us meaning and they give us value and they give us significance.

And if we're honest with ourselves, man, these are the words that our souls crave. Our souls desire. And you know what? We crave them. We desire from our earthly fathers. You know? Like, man, I always, growing up, I always wanted my dad to look and see what I was doing and to say, Well done.

Jess, I love what you're doing. You're so amazing at this or you're so amazing at that. I wanted to be praised by him. I was one of the most famous things that we used to say on vacation was, Dad, check this out.

You know? Dad, look at this. Because we have this innate desire to see our dads look and see what we're doing and rejoice over us. And you know what?

[22 : 29] So often we don't get them. I think of my own, what I do as a father and how often my sons or my daughter will say, I look at this and I don't even bother to look.

How often they say, check this out. And I look and I don't say a word of blessing over them. Man, and their souls that crave this love.

And these words of blessing from the earthly father doesn't happen. I grew up the same way. And you know what? All of us, because we're not perfect dads and we don't grow up with perfect dads. But we can get that from our heavenly father.

That's the amazing thing that we see here. Because God made us to receive his words of love. His words of love that satisfy. Not like any earthly father's words can satisfy.

But let's make no mistake. This doesn't mean that God doesn't expect anything of us. God, we don't just get to do whatever we want. God isn't some cosmic cheerleader up in the sky that just stands back and says like, Yay, I'm just going to root for you no matter what you're doing.

[23 : 36] Good job. Good job. You're awesome. You're awesome. You're awesome. Right? That's what cheerleaders do. Cheerleaders, that's their job is to root no matter what's going on. You could be losing the game by 100 points.

And for whatever reason, they're on the sidelines with a huge smile on their face going, Yay! Yay! You're like, do they not realize what is happening in that game?

Are they disconnected from reality? Right? But that isn't what God the Father's like. He's not a cosmic cheerleader. Yes, he loves us. And he speaks blessing over us.

And he rejoices over us. But he is a father that demands obedience as well. God the Father in his love gives us commands to obey. Genesis 1.28, it says this, God blessed them.

He blessed Adam and Eve. He blessed the human race. And God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

[24 : 40] And God said, Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have food for them. See, what's happening here is God created.

God blesses them. And then he gives them a command. This is what you are meant to do. And God is commanding his people that he gave life to.

Now, this may be hard to grasp. How can God be both loving and demanding? It's hard for us to reconcile, especially in this day and age, because our understanding of love is rooted in freedom and our autonomy, right?

And if you really love me, you're going to let me do what I want to do. And you're going to let me be who I want to be. And you're going to stand by like that cheerleader going, hey, no matter what, I love you. But that's, the Bible disagrees with us there.

It shows us something completely different. God the Father is a father who gives orders. But he's not doing it out of spite. He's not doing it to ruin our good time.

[25 : 51] He's actually, he does it because he loves us. And in fact, what we see from that verse we read, God's commands are surrounded in love. It says before he gives them the orders, it says he blesses them, right?

God blessed them. And in fact, how did he bless them? He blessed them by giving them a command. So his commands, his purposes are life-giving. They're not life-taking.

They point us to God's plan of what flourishing looks like and what it is to live life in its fullness. So you may be here and what kind of, I want to ask you, what kind of picture do you have of God?

Is he this drill sergeant that's in your face yelling at you, telling you what to do? You better obey out of fear there's going to be consequences. Or do you see this picture we see of God the Father?

God's commands in his word that gives commands because he loves us. Commands that yield purpose and meaning and life. I mean, let's be honest. Let's break down God's commands in verse 28 and 29.

[26 : 52] He says to them, be fruitful, all right? Guys, go make stuff, produce stuff, be creative, have fun. And you know what? I'm going to enable you to do that. I'm going to give you the power to do that. What's the next command?

Fill the earth. Man, go, explore. Or check things out. Have fun in the creation I made. He says, multiply. Man, make families.

Have babies. Create these communities of love. And then subdue it. Subdue creation. Have dominion over it. Go and rule and reign over this creation.

Go establish peace and order wherever you go. Man, that really sounds like a mean God, right? No. Actually, those are all amazing things when we think about it.

None of those things sound like a curse. Those things are like, sweet. Sign me up for that. I want to do that. Man, God, the Father's commands aren't absent of love at all. They are actually proof that he loves us.

[27 : 51] His commands, what he's doing there, he's just saying, I gave you existence. Go figure it out. He actually gives us purpose. He gives us significance.

And he does that by putting us on his mission. Not our own mission. His mission. Man, don't we long, deep down, to find the meaning of life.

What's our purpose in this life? What is the way we can find significance in this life? And this is exactly what God the Father does for us. It's amazing. He commands us, puts us on his mission, the mission, to spread his love and glory to the ends of the earth.

Some of us here might be thinking, okay, okay, wait a second. I got this figured out. I got this figured out. God wants us to earn his love and blessing. He says, man, obey me.

Then you can earn my love and blessing. Kind of like dangling that carrot, you know? We're just always running toward trying to find this love and blessing that God has. If you just do, do, do more, more, more, you'll finally get it.

[28 : 54] But that's not who God the Father is. Remember, God blessed them first. He gave them his love first before he commanded them to do anything. And this is the message of the whole Bible, guys.

This is the message from beginning to end that we see. Man, God loves us first. We don't obey in order to earn God's love. Actually, we obey because he first loved us.

See, obedience follows love. 1 John 5, 3 says this, for this is the love of God that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. So when we disobey God, when we sin, we're not having an obedience problem there.

Actually, ultimately, deep down, we're having a love problem. Sin is loving something more than God. Sin demands that we disobey God.

Sin demands that we reject God, right? It believes that there is a better blessing out there besides the Father's blessing. It believes that there is a greater purpose besides the Father's purpose.

[30 : 00] It believes that there is significance that we can find outside of the one that the Father gives to us, and so we run away from God. We take ourselves out from under his blessing and from out from under his love, and we take ourselves out of his mission.

So, do we ever find that same depth of love and significant and purpose elsewhere? No. No, we don't. And it's proof because we just run from one thing to the next, never satisfied.

And here's why. What we do is we trade a limitless God, an infinite God who has infinite, limitless love toward us, and who gives us an infinitely greater purpose than anything we can find.

We trade it. What do we trade it for? We trade it for things that are finite. We trade it for things that are limited, created things. We try to find love and purpose in people and causes.

And often, you know what? They do bring momentary joy. Let's be honest. Man, we find that relationship. We find this cause to get behind. And man, we feel significant.

[31 : 11] Man, we feel loved and cherished. But those are momentary things. And they pass, and it's gone. And then we start looking for something better. What's the next best thing? A better relationship, a better cause.

And for some of us, you know what? We don't find any of those things. Or we come to the end of it and realize, like, man, I am.

I feel like a dog chasing its tail, trying to find satisfaction and joy and love and meaning in this life. And we come despondent and we check out.

Sometimes that's by tragically taking our own life. But more often, it's by numbing ourselves. That's how we respond.

We want to escape from this reality. We want to escape from this longing to be loved and cherished, this longing for significance that we just can't seem to find. So, we turn to other things.

[32 : 05] It could be alcohol. It could be drugs. It could be a relationship. It could be entertainment. It could be revelry and partying. It could be so many things because we're looking for something to fill that longing and that hole in our soul.

And in the end, we find that, man, sin started with one seemingly small, insignificant step away from God the Father. But it took us farther than we ever intended to go.

Man, that is how flirting at the office turns into an affair. It's the pathway from escaping through one little drink to turning into being an alcoholic. It's the pathway to us becoming shopaholics who are drowning in debt.

Or the lonely workaholic enslaved to a vision of power, prestige, and wealth, trying to find significance from their career. See, sin takes us farther than we ever want to go, keeps us longer than we ever want to stay, and costs us more than we're ever willing to pay.

The farther we move down the path of sin, the more distant God feels. And the reason that is, is because sin is running from God. It's rejecting Him and running in the opposite direction.

[33 : 22] And we're all guilty of this. I'm guilty of this. I sin every single day. I'm not special. Now, I want to ask you this question.

If this is true about us, we're always and constantly running away from God. But if you or I were an all-powerful God, how would we respond to this kind of rejection and rebellion?

I'm honest. When I feel rejected, I don't respond well. And I don't have a lot of power. But the little power I have, I try to wield it. Right? I'm a dad. When my sons disobey, that gets me angry.

That gets me hopping mad. I see red. Man, I just want to punish them. Sinfully punish them. I want to ground them. I want to withhold my love. I want to do all kinds of things.

Man, and sometimes I'm sorry to say, man, it would be something that would be so satisfying. Man, to be able to punish them. And I have to repent of those thoughts and those attitudes. And some of us, we've had fathers who went way too far in their response to our disobedience.

[34 : 32] We've received punishment of physical or verbal abuse, just battered over and over again. Some of us have had fathers who distanced themselves or disowned us because of our disobedience, feeling that punishment or rejection, that withholding of their love and their presence from us.

So, how does God the Father, how did he respond to our disobedience? Did he end the relationship? Did he take us out?

Did he just decide to end us? Would he just stand by and do nothing? Just distancing himself from us, being like, okay, when you get your act together, we can talk, you can come back to me with your tail between your legs.

No. God did what none of us would do. God the Father did what none of us would do. He pursued us.

He found us. And he brought us back to himself. God the Father gives us himself. What God did, what he did do, sorry, what did God do when the first people he made disobeyed him?

[35 : 42] Genesis 3, 8 says this, See, God knew Adam and Eve have sinned, and yet he came down from heaven to walk in the garden, to spend time with them.

And because they sinned, they ran away and they hid from this good father. But the father didn't give up. He said, well, I can't find them. I'll see you later. Maybe next time. No, he pursued them, right? That's what we see here.

He pursued them, and he found them, and he called them out of their hiding. He didn't let them stay in their hiding. Sorry, I just accidentally did something to my thing here.

And you know what? God hasn't changed. The Father's heart, his love hasn't changed. Who he is hasn't changed. The Father's love is a pursuing love. That's who he is. And it doesn't matter what you've done.

It doesn't matter if you're running away from him. It doesn't matter if you're rebelling against him. It doesn't matter if you hate him, if you're shaking your fist at him today and saying, I wish you didn't exist.

[37 : 02] Leave me alone. And because he's a father that loves you and is going to pursue you, and he's a father that calls you to himself. Why? Why does he do that?

Because he wants to be with us. He wants to be with us. That's the goal of his love. And that's the goal of love, to be close, to be near, and to be present.

And ultimately, God the Father showed his love to us by sending his son Jesus. Right? Jesus came. He was called Emmanuel, God with us. He came down to show us the Father, to show us his power and his goodness and his love.

Jesus said this to one of his disciples in John 14, 8. One of his disciples said to him, Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us. Jesus responded to him and says this, mind blown.

Have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father?

[38 : 14] If you're here and you're like, man, I just can't believe the Father's love. How can I know this? What we do is we can look to Jesus. We can look to his life. We can look to his love. We can look to what he did for us in this life and sacrificing himself for us on the cross.

And when we look at that and when we see him and when we see the way he ministered out of love for his people, for the sake of us, we see the Father's love. We begin to understand and know the Father for the first time.

Colossians says, man, he is the image of the invisible God. It was pleasing that the fullness of God, for the fullness of God to dwell in him. He came to earth and he showed us not a little picture of the Father, but who the Father exactly is.

And he didn't just come to show us the Father. He actually came to make a way back to the Father for us. John 14, 6, Jesus said to them, I am the way and the truth and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. Through Jesus, we have access to the Father because the Father made a way for us through his Son.

[39 : 23] He knew we could never come up to him. He knew we would never go to him. And so he came down to us. He came for us. 1 John 4, 10. This is love.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation, to be the sacrifice, the atoning sacrifice, the satisfaction of the Father for our sins.

That's how crazy in love the Father is with you and I. That he sent his only begotten Son. He sent his very Son to us to die for us, to make us sons.

1 John 3, 1. See, see what kind of love the Father has given to us. And another version of the Bible says, see what kind of love the Father has lavished on us.

I love that word so much more. That's what he's done. He's lavished his love on us. That we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are.

[40 : 23] And so we are. Man, this, guys, is the greater identity that we belong to God the Father. We are his and he is ours.

And when we realize how good God's love is, man, we hold fast to it. We hold fast to it above all things. Like that NASCAR seat. No more patches with all kinds of labels trying to define us.

We're not holding on to the ones we like and trying to get rid of the ones we don't like. Only one. Only one defines us. Son and daughter to our Heavenly Father.

Nothing, nothing can separate you and I from that love. Nothing can separate us from the love of God the Father. And God the Father, what he does, he confirms this relationship.

We're not left wondering after he saved us, man, does he really love me? No. He confirms it by sending the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit, into our hearts. Check out what Romans 8.14 says.

[41 : 24] All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry, Abba, Abba.

You know, the first person to say that to God was Jesus. The Spirit comes and he comes into us and he gives us this confidence to know that we are sons of God. It says the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

The Holy Spirit comes into us and begins to teach us the language of love. He begins to teach us this covenantal relationship language that has existed for eternity. And we begin to know this amazing Father who loves us beyond our wildest dreams and our wildest imaginations, who accepts us and brings us to himself.

We're not orphaned children. We're not abandoned and rejected. We are sons and daughters who have been sought out and adopted by our Heavenly Father. Man, he gives us confidence.

He gives us confidence that is true by his Holy Spirit, by whom we experience the Father's love. Through Jesus, we can know the Father and his love.

[42 : 37] By the Spirit, we experience the Father and his love. And God the Father gives us himself through the Son, by the Spirit. If I could have the band come up as we close.

I want to ask you this. If you're here and you're not a Christian, man, again, so glad that you're here with us. And then I hope today, I hope today you heard how amazing the Father's love is for you.

The Father loves you so much. Maybe you've been hiding. You've been ashamed. You've been running. You've been rebelling. You've hated God even. And God the Father still loves you.

God the Father is still pursuing you. And he's after you. Maybe you've picked up labels that you desperately want taken away from you.

Maybe it's liar, thief, adulterer, bankrupt, divorce, addict. Hopeless. Maybe people have called you a disappointment.

[43 : 39] And you've tried the best to get rid of these labels, but they just won't come off. You just can't seem to shake them.

It feels like every time you tear off that patch, it seems to get slapped back on somewhere. And there's only one way. There's only one way those labels get removed. It's only through the blood of Jesus.

And today, I want to invite you to believe and receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior. He is the way to the Father. He is the way to the Father's love.

And when you do, when you say, okay, when you surrender, Lord, I'm going to accept you as my Lord and Savior. Man, the Father comes and he tears off all those labels so that there's none left.

Every embarrassing label, every label of shame that you've been carrying, it's no more. And instead, he slaps a big label on you. A son and daughter that I love and who I delight in.

[44 : 46] I'm going to give you purpose. Where you've had no purpose, I'm going to give you purpose. Where you've felt no love, you're going to experience love like never before. And you're going to hear me rejoicing over you and loving you and caring for you.

I want to invite you into that relationship today. And you could be here and you could be saying this silently to yourself. Man, God, the Father, I didn't know this.

I didn't know how good you were and I've been running from you. And I didn't even know what I was running from. Forgive me of my sins for running from you and rejecting you. Save me.

Save me today. I believe in the sacrifice of your son that shows me your love. I believe that he died for my sins. And I believe you can come and remove these labels that have defined me.

That have dogged me my whole life. The Father is faithful to come and adopt you and be your father. If you're here and you're a Christian, man, let's be reminded how good the Father is.

[45 : 57] That he's a strong Father that's to be feared and to be in awe of. But he's a loving Father that is to be trusted, who calls us to himself and loves us and speaks life over us.

Maybe you're here and a Christian have picked up some labels during your journey of faith. It happens to all of us. It happens to all of us. And you need the Father's love to come and be reminded who you are, to come and tear those labels off.

Man, come to him and ask him to just show you and to teach you his love. Run to Jesus. Maybe some of us, some of those labels are there because of Sandman. Run to Jesus.

Run to him. And we can go and we can repent because his sacrifice is enough. You're not going to find a father who's mad at you for your sin. As you run to him in repentance, trusting in Jesus our Savior, you're going to find a father who is so quick to forgive.

Who's so quick to bring you in. Who's so quick to wrap his arms around you in love and say, Don't worry my son. Don't worry my daughter. You are restored. I love you. Nothing has changed.