

“Your God is Too Small”

Exodus 34:1-9

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever been mislabeled? Maybe someone called you “shallow” or “a failure,” and it stuck. There is power in a name. They shape how we see ourselves, and how we see God. Many of us walk through life with distorted views of God. We see Him as distant, angry, hard to please, like an absentee father, or even Santa Claus. When we get God’s name wrong, we are unable to relate to Him. When we think better about God, we will live better for God.

In Exodus 34, God tells us exactly who He is. Moses had been on the mountain with God for six weeks, leaving the Israelites to conclude that God was uncaring and that He left them. So, they decided to build and worship a golden calf. Yet, instead of abandoning them, God shows up and declares His name: merciful, gracious, steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiving, and just.

God’s name is not uncaring – it’s compassionate. Just because God is compassionate doesn’t mean that we don’t suffer; it means that He is in the suffering with us. God’s name is also not contractual – it’s steadfast love. God’s love isn’t based on our performance or church attendance. It’s not like a contract we can break. It’s a covenant, anchored in His character, not our behavior. Lastly, God’s name is not punitive – it’s patient. When we see God as punitive, we create distance. God is slow to anger and pardoning, extending forgiveness to us even when we don’t deserve it.

To truly live in freedom and peace, we have to believe the truth about God. He is compassionate, patient, and full of steadfast love. And when we believe that, we stop running *from* Him and start running *to* Him. He’s not just holy and mighty; He’s also our Dad. And He never stops loving His kids.

GETTING STARTED

1. Have you ever been given a nickname or label that stuck with you – good or bad?
2. When you think of the word “father,” what feelings or images come to mind?

LET'S GET PERSONAL

1. What labels or lies have you believed about yourself that need to be rewritten with the truth?
2. In what ways have you related to God more like a judge than a loving, compassionate Father?
3. Do you find it easy or difficult to believe God still loves you when you mess up? Why?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What's one way that you can show God's compassion to someone else this week?
2. Pray and ask God to show you one false belief you've had about Him and one truth to replace it with. Write it down in a journal.
3. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: Exodus 34:1-9; Psalm 8:4; Isaiah 49:14-16; Matthew 9:34.

RENEW YOUR MIND

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..."

Exodus 34:6