



Week 4: The Heart of God the Spirit, God the Father, and God as Revealed in the Old Testament

Based on “Gentle & Lowly” by Dane Ortlund
NCAC Adult Sunday School ▪ February 6, 2022

What makes you feel loved by someone?

COURSE GOAL: To reflect on not just what Jesus has done or is doing, but on who he *is*—and to then find encouragement, strength and rest as we delight in the deepest affections of Christ for his people.

Want to Read Along? *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund (Crossway, 2020)

- February 6: Chapters 13-16
- February 13: Chapters 17-21
- February 20: Chapters 22-23

Christ has revealed to us his true heart: ²⁸ *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹ *Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for **I am gentle and lowly in heart**, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰ *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)*

Christ is now our sympathetic high priest: *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to **sympathize with our weaknesses**, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)*

Christ will never cast out his own: *“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever comes to me I will never cast out.**” (John 6:37)*

Christ is now interceding for us: *“Consequently, **he is able to save to the uttermost** those who draw near to God through him, **since he always lives to make intercession for them.**” (Hebrews 7:25)*

Christ is our Advocate: *“My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But **if anyone does sin, we have an advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1)*

Christ is also our Friend: *“The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look at him! A **glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!**’” (Matthew 11:19)*

TODAY’S QUESTION: Is what we are seeing in Christ somehow out of step with what we see in Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit, the Father, or God as revealed in the Old Testament?

What is the role of the Holy Spirit? What does he actually do?

“What I propose...is that the Spirit makes the heart of Christ real to us: not just heard, but seen; not just seen, but felt; not just felt, but enjoyed. The Spirit takes what we read in the Bible and believe on paper about Jesus’s heart and moves it from theory to reality, from doctrine to experience.”
(Ortlund, in *Gentle and Lowly*, p. 122)

*“But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. ⁷Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: **it is to your advantage that I go away**, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.” (Jesus, in John 16:6-7)*

What is said or implied by Jesus about the advantage of the Holy Spirit for us?

*“¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴ He will glorify me, for **he will take what is mine and declare it to you**. ¹⁵ All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jesus, in John 16:13-15)*

What do we learn here about the relationship between the work of the Holy Spirit and Jesus?

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 6a

“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1 Corinthians 2:12)

“To grasp the role of the Holy Spirit, according to this text, we must bear in mind that the Greek word underlying *understood* (*oida*) should not be restricted to merely intellectual apprehension. This verb simply means ‘to know,’ and as is generally the case with the Bible’s language of epistemology, *knowing* here is something holistic—not less than intellectual apprehension, but more. **It is experiential knowing, the way you know the sun is warm when you stand with your face raised to the sky on a cloudless June day.** Paul is saying that the Spirit has been given to us in order that we might know, way down deep, the endless grace of the heart of God.” (*Gentle and Lowly*, p. 125)

Is it your experience that the Holy Spirit helps you to know deep down the love and grace of Christ? If so, how does this happen?

What are some ways people view the character of the Father as different than that of the Son? What might make us prone to do this?

⁹ Jesus said to him, “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’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.” (John 14:9-10)

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of mercies** and God of all comfort.” (2 Corinthians 1:3)

What do we learn from these verses about God the Father? What does it mean that he is “the Father of mercies”?

“He is the Father of mercies. Just as a father begets children who reflect who he is, the divine Father begets mercies that reflect him....To speak of God the Father as ‘the Father of mercies’ is to say that he is the one who multiplies compassionate mercies to his needful, wayward, messy, fallen, wandering people....‘Father of mercies’ is the Bible’s way of taking us into the deepest recesses of who God the Father is. A correct understanding of the triune God is not that of a Father whose central disposition is judgment and a Son whose central disposition is love. The heart of both is one and the same; this is, after all, one God, not two.” (Gentle and Lowly, pp. 129-130)

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 6b

“Who is God the Father? Just that: our Father. Some of us had great dads growing up. Others of us were horribly mistreated or abandoned by them. Whatever the case, the good in our earthly dads is a faint pointer to the true goodness of our heavenly Father, and the bad in our earthly dads is the photo negative of who our heavenly Father is. He is the Father of whom every human father is a shadow (Eph. 3:15).” (Gentle and Lowly, p. 132)

What are some ways that God the Father is better than any earthly father could ever be?

If we did not have a positive experience with our earthly father, what might help us develop a correct view of God as Father?

How is God sometimes viewed as being different in the Old Testament than the New Testament?

Consider Lamentation 3:31-33, from a book strong on both God's judgment and God's sovereignty:

³¹ For the Lord will not cast off forever,

³² but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion
according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

³³ for **he does not afflict from his heart** or grieve the children of men.

Pair that with Jeremiah 32:41, which speaks of God's heart regarding blessing and restoration:

*"I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness,
with all my heart and all my soul."*

And ponder God's own description of himself to Moses in Exodus 34:6-7, a defining text of God that is echoed repeatedly throughout the Old Testament:

"⁶ The Lord passed before [Moses] and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷ keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'"

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 7

What does God's description of himself in Exodus 34:6-7 reveal about his heart?

How did Jesus prove that Exodus 34:6-7 is an accurate description of God?

"The Christian life, from one angle, is the long journey of letting our natural assumption about who God is, over many decades, fall away, being slowly replaced with God's own insistence on who he is. This is hard work. It takes a lot of sermons and a lot of suffering to believe that God's deepest heart is 'merciful and gracious, slow to anger.'

"The fall in Genesis 3 not only sent us into condemnation and exile. **The fall also entrenched in our minds dark thoughts of God, thoughts that are only dug out over multiple exposures to the gospel over many years.** Perhaps Satan's greatest victory in your life today is not the sin in which you regularly indulge but the dark thoughts of God's heart that cause you to go there in the first place and keep you cool toward him in the wake of it." (*Gentle and Lowly, pp. 151-52*)