

Approaching the Unapproachable God

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[0 : 00] Let's ask God to help us as we look at his word together. Living and holy God, we have no right to come before you tonight except through the blood and mercy extended of Jesus and your grace given to us through him.

We pray, therefore, that you would deal with us gently and mercifully in his name. That you would send your Holy Spirit into our hearts to open our eyes and unstop our ears and soften our hearts.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, we talked last week about some of the difficulties that we face when it comes to knowing God.

God isn't a part of our space and time, so how could we ever see him? God is so different from us, so transcendent, so much greater than us, so how can we ever know the truth about him?

And we saw some of the answers to those questions. The creation that God has made can testify to his glory and greatness in some measure. He has spoken to us in words.

[1 : 19] And supremely, he has sent his son to communicate what he's like to us. Well, this week I'm afraid that we're going to find out that our problems are even bigger than we saw last week.

The biggest barriers we face when it comes to knowing God aren't, it turns out, intellectual, but relational. God has a problem with us.

Let me begin by backing up a little. If you were here last week, you might remember that I read a quote from C.S. Lewis where he compared God to an author of a novel or a playwright.

He said we shouldn't expect to find God in creation any more than we should expect to find Shakespeare in Hamlet. The only way we can encounter God or hope to encounter God, he says, is if God writes himself into our story.

That is, if he appears as a character on the stage that is creation. And of course, the great news is that that's exactly what God has done in the person of his son.

[2 : 25] Jesus is God with us. God living in space and time alongside us forever. But Jesus is the ultimate expression of a pattern that goes right back through the Old Testament.

The fact is, God is continually appearing in the story of the world. He walks in the Garden of Eden. He shows up in a burning bush. He descends in smoke and darkness on Mount Sinai.

He speaks from a pillar of fire as he leads his people out of Egypt. He makes his home in the temple at Jerusalem. These are all God writing himself into human history.

They aren't literal appearances of God, but accommodations to our existence. As Solomon says at the dedication of his temple, I read a bit of this last week. But will God really dwell on earth?

The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built. Yet give attention to your servant's prayer and his plea for mercy, Lord my God.

[3 : 34] Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open towards this temple night and day. This place of which you said, my name shall be there, so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place.

That's from 1 Kings 8, 27 to 29. The temple and other places like it, in other words, are like embassies.

Places where God provides a symbolic presence. Places where he agrees to meet with his people and hear prayers and receive sacrifices and show his goodness.

Places where his holiness is revealed. Places where God's presence.

Places where God's presence. In Ezekiel 47, for example, Ezekiel's vision says this. The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east.

[5 : 01] He said to me, this water flows toward the eastern region and goes into the Arabah where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river.

Their leaves will not wither nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.

God's presence where God comes close to his people and lives in peace with his people. Life flows forth.

In Psalm 84, the temple is described as a place of joy, even for animals. How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty. My soul yearns, even faints for the courts of the Lord.

Even the sparrow has found a home and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young, a place near your altar. Yet the Bible also depicts God's presence as a thing to be feared.

[6 : 04] When the people come out of Egypt and go to Mount Sinai and meet with God, what happens is terrifying. Exodus 20, verse 18. When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear.

They stayed at a distance and said to Moses, speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die. Or in Leviticus 10.

Aaron's sons, the priests, Nadab and Abihu, took their censers, put fire in them and added incense. And they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command.

So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them. And they died before the Lord. This kind of thing happens again and again, of course, in the Old Testament. In 1 Samuel 6, 19-19, 70 men from Beth Shemesh die after looking into the Ark of the Covenant.

In 1 Chronicles 13.10, one of David's men, Uzzah, dies after steadying the Ark on a cart when the oxen stumble. God's presence is complicated.

[7 : 21] God's presence is complicated. Both a good thing and a bad thing. In some ways we might say it's like the sun that warms us and gives life to everything, but will destroy us if we get too close to it.

Or to adapt another analogy from last week, God's like a distant hurricane that brings rain to a parched inland, but destroys houses and villages along a coast.

The question is, why is he like that? Why is he both good and dangerous?

Well, as Isaiah shows, the problem is that God is holy. That is, he is absolutely pure. Absolutely worthy of reverence and respect.

Absolutely opposed to every moral compromise. Every half-truth or unclean thought or unkind word. And nothing that is impure or casual or ordinary can survive in his presence.

[8 : 30] And God's holiness is the big concern in the book of Isaiah, actually. Isaiah's ministry occurs at a turning point in Israel's history. We've gone back in time from our passage last week, where the Babylonians haven't appeared on the scene yet.

But Assyria is soon going to be threatening Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah. But the bigger issue is that Judah is in trouble with God. Although the kingdom has been doing well under King Uzziah, it has become godless.

Judah expects to save itself through political alliances instead of relying on God. It ignores the warnings of God's prophets. Its people live for wine and pleasure, but have no interest in the works of the Lord.

And King Uzziah himself took God's holiness so lightly that he disobeyed God's commands and thought he would play the priest, go and offer incense in the temple, and was struck with leprosy till the day he died as a result.

So God is going to have to take extreme measures to impress his holiness on his people. It's going to be very painful as we read on through Isaiah. But in the meantime, God begins by giving Isaiah himself a vision that has many reminders of God's holiness.

[9 : 57] We see it in the angels, the seraphim who surround God in his vision. Their name means burning ones because they are aflame with the light and purity of God's presence.

But even they can't stand that presence. They have to protect themselves from God. They have to cover their faces and feet from exposure to God while they sing his praise.

We also see God's holiness in the song they sing, of course. Holy, holy, holy. In Hebrew, one of the ways superlatives work is by repeating the adjective.

The most holy place is the holy, holy place, literally in Hebrew. But God is more than most holy.

He is most, most, most holy. He is holy, holy, holy. He is completely holy, utterly holy. Here and also in Revelation 4, we have holy repeated three times.

[10 : 59] In verse 4, we see the effects of God's holy presence. The sound of the angels makes the temple shake and fills the place with smoke. This should remind us of Exodus 20, where God comes down to Sinai.

But I think it should also remind us of Ezekiel 1 last week, where we have fire and smoke and cloud displayed in God's presence too. But there are lots of other places where God's presence is described like that.

Sometimes it has to do with his wrath and judgment. In Isaiah 29, verses 5 and 6, when God comes to rescue Jerusalem from enemy armies, we read, Suddenly in an instant, the Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames and a devouring fire.

Sometimes this impact on creation is to do with God's wrath and judgment. But sometimes it just seems to be about the fact that created reality isn't strong enough to withstand God's presence.

Creation is like a sandcastle that might collapse if God walks too close, or like a soap bubble that might burst if he touches it. Listen to how Psalm 104 puts it.

[12 : 14] May the glory of the Lord endure forever. May the Lord rejoice in his works. He who looks at the earth and it trembles, who touches the mountains and they smoke. God is much more real than our world, it seems.

His presence threatens to undo creation. In Isaiah's case, however, this inability of creation to withstand the presence of God compounds his fear and unworthiness.

God might snuff out his existence at any moment. And indeed, why wouldn't he, since he's so unworthy of God's presence? Verse 5. Woe to me, I cried, I am ruined.

I'm a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips. And my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty. One glimpse of God and his glory.

And Isaiah realizes that he is completely unfit to come near. But why does he worry especially about his lips? Maybe it's because he's a prophet, so God focuses his attention on the need for his speech to be holy.

[13 : 24] Maybe it's because his lips are just a symbol of the whole tenor of his life. Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks, says Jesus in Matthew 12, verse 34. I think it's mostly about the contrast he sees between himself and the seraphim.

Here are creatures who belong in God's presence. They are burning with holiness. They speak of nothing but God and his glory. And Isaiah immediately realizes that he is nothing like that.

His lips speak about ordinary things, or worse, less than ordinary things. Unclean things that are dishonoring of himself and other people and God. He's supposed to be one of God's holy people, but he doesn't talk like it.

I think that's a challenge to us too, isn't it? If we are Christians, then the Apostle Peter says, we too are meant to be a nation of priests. 1 Peter 2, 9, You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

We too are supposed to be people with holy speech, who overflow with thankfulness, who speak about God's deeds and God's glory. Is that what your speech is like?

[14 : 43] I must confess, it isn't often what my speech is like. Earlier this year, I finished reading through Matt Pupper's excellent book, Look and Live, with my son Jack.

Look and Live is about the glory of God, and it exhorts us to meditate on God's glory and praise him. But Jack and I noticed as we read through it, how unnatural that seems to us.

We can get enthusiastic about lots of things, but praising God seems like talking a foreign language. We discovered that we need to be converted in our speech too, which is going to be hard because we aren't just people of unclean lips.

We are living, like Isaiah, among a people of unclean lips. Thinking and talking about God's holiness is completely alien to our culture.

We live in a society that finds God talk embarrassing and weird. We live in a society that hates and actively suppresses any talk of God finding fault with human sinfulness.

[15 : 48] Just think about the furor stirred up by Israel Folau's notorious Instagram post about hell. So being people of holy speech and talking about a holy God is going to feel very strange and unnatural to us.

And if we're going to resist our culture at this point, we have to connect to countercultural forces that will help us. That means, as we read in Hebrews, meeting with other Christians regularly.

It might mean making sure that we keep an eye out for Christians who are willing to talk about these things in particular and being willing ourselves. It might mean reading through a gospel and taking special note of what Jesus tells us about how to act and speak in light of God's holiness.

It might mean asking people for recommendations for books that will keep reminding us of the truth of God's holiness and how we live in the light of that. Maybe it will mean trying to ensure that we are listening to a good proportion of encouraging Christian music along with whatever else we listen to.

The point is, however, that we are not naturally holy. We need help if we're going to speak and act like the holy people that we're supposed to be. And yet that's not where we begin.

[17 : 01] If we only try to make ourselves holy, we'll never get there. We might do better. But remember, God isn't after better. He's after absolutely pure, absolutely holy.

Isaiah 6 verse 6 gives us a much better place to start. Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.

With it he touched my mouth and said, See, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for. The real solution to our lack of holiness is the one that God provides.

He can make us holy. He can provide a sacrifice that takes away our guilt and atones for our sin. The fire that should destroy us will burn somewhere else.

It will touch our lips, but it won't destroy us. And once we've kissed that coal, we will be changed. We'll be able to stand before God and know a new kind of blessing.

[18 : 11] Not the blessing of his far off presence, the distant light of the sun or the rain of a far off storm. But the close up warmth of God's love.

This is the closeness that John describes in Revelation 22. They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of the lamp or the light of the sun for the Lord God will give them light and they will reign forever and ever.

The writer of Hebrews has his own way of describing it, comparing the holy terror of Mount Sinai with the peace and love that comes through the sacrifice of Jesus. You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire to darkness, gloom and storm.

The sight that was so terrifying that Moses said, I'm trembling with fear. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels and joyful assembly to the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

You have come to God, the judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect. To Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

[19 : 25] The New Testament is clear that Jesus is the true sacrifice who makes this new blessing possible. Isaiah experiences a foretaste of it in his temple vision here.

But his experience of terror reminds us that there is something wrong with the old system too. The existing sacrifices have not worked for him. He needs God to do something new if he is to survive God's presence.

And this lines up with what we see throughout the Old Testament, doesn't it? Under the old system, nobody gets really close to God. Only Moses and a few other people get to go up Mount Sinai and even they don't see much.

Only the high priest gets to go into the most holy part of the temple and only once a year and only under the cover of incense smoke, lest he see too much of God and die.

But of course, Jesus changes all that. He brings the true and greater sacrifice. He doesn't just give us a symbolic or temporary access to God.

[20 : 33] He actually takes away our guilt. He really atones for our sins. As I put it last week, Jesus gives us a way through the fire, through the storm into the still center of the hurricane where we can get to know God up close.

If we put our trust in him, he makes us holy and because holy, completely safe with a holy God.

I wonder if that's how you think about God and your relationship to him. Because it's certainly not the only way we can think about it. For some people, God is a sort of vague, far off and kindly deity.

He generally wants good for us and for the world. But his plans for the world are frustrated by our selfishness and so on. And we hope that one day it will get better. And we hope that one day after we die, we'll experience more of God's kindness up close.

But it's a hope. That idea is partly right, of course. It fits with the idea that God's relationship to the world brings blessing. But it ignores all the scary things that both Old Testament and New Testament say about what happens when God gets close to us.

[21 : 54] It relies on an incomplete and wishful and simplified version of the God of the Bible that is destined to fail catastrophically when we encounter the holy God up close.

Another way people think about God is that he's a bit unpredictable. When things go well for us, we feel like he's on our side.

When things go badly, we worry that we've done something to make him angry. And we might try to make up for it by being good or doing something religious. In some ways, that way of thinking about God is better than the first way because it takes God's holiness a bit more seriously.

It recognises that God has a problem with the wrong things that we do and say. And it tries to make amends. But it doesn't take God's holiness seriously enough either.

It relies on the idea that God just wants us to be mostly good. Which makes about as much sense as the idea that you would want your drinking water to be mostly sewage free or your tea to be mostly cyanide free.

[23 : 07] Holy means holy. Sin is poison as far as God is concerned. But I'm arguing that the right way to think about God is in the light of Jesus and his sacrifice.

That means acknowledging that God is holy and we are not. And believing that Jesus can still make us right with God. It doesn't ignore the scary things that the Bible says about God's judgment.

It gives us freedom to admit how far we are from God's standards. But it also gives us great confidence. Because our hope is in Jesus and his sacrifice and not in ourselves.

This is the vision of God that makes sense of the Bible as a whole. Not just the nice bits. It's the vision that Jesus gives us in the Gospels when he declares that his death is a ransom.

It's the vision that the Apostle Paul has when he says in 1 Timothy 1.15 that Christ came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst. It's the vision that has powered the Church through the centuries.

[24 : 17] It's the vision that Martin Luther had when he realized that God could make him righteous as a gift. The vision that made him feel like he had been born again and entered heaven through open gates.

It's the vision that changed John Newton from a slave trader into the man who wrote Amazing Grace. Jesus is the true coal from the altar who takes away our sin and atones for our guilt.

He's the one who lets people with unclean lips and hearts stand before a holy God. If you're unsure about this, if it's unclear, if you want to know more, please come and ask either me or Andrew or BJ about it afterwards.

Because it is literally, and I mean literally, literally, it is literally the best news you'll ever hear. But there's still one more aspect of the problem that we haven't gotten to yet.

And in some ways it's the strangest and most scary aspect of this vision of God. After Isaiah receives the coal that makes him right with God, God gives him a mission, doesn't he?

[25 : 40] He gives him a message, and it's a very strange message. Verse 9. God said, Then I said, God is saying here that, As Isaiah preaches, his message is going to make people more hostile to God.

It's going to make them less receptive to the warnings about his holiness. Less willing to receive his offer of mercy. It's going to make their hearts calloused, their ears dull and their eyes blind.

When people hear this stuff, they are going to dig in, in other words. They won't want to hear about a God who judges them and says they aren't good enough.

So they're going to find ways to deny it. Some will mock it. Some will try to work out theological excuses why it isn't true.

Some will look for prophets who will give them a better word from God. And some are just going to stop listening altogether. But the final result is that they will be worse off than they were before.

[27 : 32] God's mercy will become God's judgment for them. And this is the same for us when we think about the word of Jesus, too. Because Jesus quotes these very verses from Isaiah 6 in his own ministry, in Mark 4 and Matthew 13.

In John 9, he warns that he has come into the world to bring both sight and blindness. Some people will see God clearly and come close to him.

Some people will become more confused than ever and go further away. Which will it be for us? As you hear about God's holiness, does it make you scared?

As you hear about Jesus taking away your guilt, does it make you grateful and relieved? It should. It should. It should make us feel that way. And if it isn't making us feel that way, then the first thing we should do is ask God to have mercy on us.

Because as things stand, our lack of response means that we are under God's judgment. He is giving us over to the deadening effects of our sin.

[28 : 45] We should ask him to soften our hearts and open our ears and give us eyes that see. We should ask him to help us understand his holiness and to receive his forgiveness.

We should ask him to help us know him as he is. And we should go to Jesus, who is the ultimate fulfillment of this and every pattern in the Bible. Because Isaiah, like Ezekiel in our vision last week, is still looking forward, isn't he?

He has a glimpse of a sacrifice that will atone for sins once and for all. He has a vision of God's holiness, but it's a vision that is going to be mostly harmful to those who hear about it.

The real meaning is still to come. It's waiting in the ground like a sawn-off stump, that he talks about in verse 13. But Jesus is the one who is going to grow up from that stump.

He's the one who's going to make these things come true. He gives us the real sacrifice. He shows us what God is like when we get to know him up close. And he gives us the cure for our blind eyes and our unresponsive hearts.

[30 : 04] Let me finish by reading from Matthew 13 and 15, where Jesus quotes from Isaiah 6. This people's heart has become calloused. They hardly hear with their ears and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise, they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn and I would heal them. But blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.

For truly, I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it. And to hear what you hear, but did not hear it. Let's pray.

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you so much that we live in the fulfillment of the ages. We live after the time of Jesus. And we understand and can understand the hints and signs of the Old Testament prophets.

We thank you for the great vision you gave Isaiah in Isaiah 6. But we thank you that you give us a far greater vision through Jesus, your son. Please help us to trust in him.

[31 : 11] To believe that he has taken us to you despite our lack of holiness. Please have mercy on us and our hard hearts and deaf ears and blind eyes.

Please renew us in our understanding and teach us to see your glory in the face of Jesus. We pray these things in his name. Amen. Are you able to comment on that sort of match between God's blessing and the sending out?

Is that an Isaiah-specific example? Or can you think of other examples where that match occurs? So what is the match between the blessing and sending out?

You mean the mission following on from? Well, as soon as the coal sort of touches his lips, immediately the response is, you know, I will go. Send me. I was just wondering whether that's sort of thematic.

Yeah, thanks. That's a helpful question. Yeah, it is a pattern, isn't it? I mean, when God saves his people, he makes them priests often. That's true at Mount Sinai.

[32 : 24] You'll be for me a nation of priests, God says to his people in Exodus 19.6. And that's what happens to us, isn't it? We are saved and made a nation of priests as well and given a mission.

And it makes sense, too, that Isaiah has such a sense of being atoned for and forgiven that he willingly offers himself.

Yeah, the bigger the sense we have, I think, of what God has done for us, and to have that big sense, I think we need to have a big sense of his holiness to understand what we've been saved from, the more ready we will be to serve him, I think.

Thank you. Can I ask a question? Yeah. Could you comment on the place of reverent fear for us post-Christ?

Yeah, well, I think going by the way Hebrews talks about that kind of thing, we are supposed to be afraid of God in the same sense that we're afraid of, well, Hebrews doesn't talk about this, but in the same sense that we're afraid of electricity, for example.

[33 : 42] So we don't go around our houses kind of cringing from the walls, lest the PowerPoints kind of zap us as we go past or anything like that.

But neither do we stick knives into the PowerPoints. We understand that electricity has the power to kill us. And we understand that, you know, we need to be careful.

I mean, it's the same with everything, the sea, water. And that's true with how it is with God. We should be afraid if we are trying to approach God without the help of Jesus.

And that in Hebrews, all the New Testament is very clear about that. It's just really dangerous to try to get to God without thinking about his holiness and how he responds to sin, because it comes through again and again in the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Jesus talks about it, that we are in big trouble unless somebody can help us be right with God. So we should be afraid lest we don't trust in Jesus.

[34 : 49] We should be afraid of the God we will meet or the version of God, the side of God we'll meet if we don't come to God having been made holy through Jesus.

Andrew, just following on from maybe Price's question, what do you say to some people nowadays that treat certain things and places as holy?

And they're assigned to, you know, even church or whatever, as a place that's more holy than another place. In a sense, I want to say that they're right if they're shaping their thinking according to what the Bible says.

So the Bible says that church, as in the congregation of God's people, the gathering of God's people, is the temple of God. And that if we destroy God's temple, God will destroy us.

So, yes, there are particular people and, well, people actually, where we find God's presence and his, he identifies with those in particular, Jesus and the church particularly.

[36 : 08] And if we don't treat them with respect, we are in trouble. But as to physical objects or buildings or things like that, well, that's an Old Testament way of looking at God or the way that it's an Old Testament way of approaching God, which has been superseded by the true temple.

So getting to Hebrews again, in Hebrews 8 and 9 and 10, the writer talks about how Jesus has given us access to the true temple, the true presence of God, which is in heaven.

The old way of dealing with God through a physical embassy on earth has been done away with because our high priest that we have access to is no longer on earth, but he's in heaven next to sitting at God's right hand.

So I think I'd want to redirect the attention there. Can you suggest some practical ways that we can get better at using our lips to declare God's holiness, given that it is unnatural and countercultural?

I'm still working that out. Thanks, Sandra. That's a good question. Do you have any thoughts while I'm thinking? Vijay has some ideas, I think.

[37 : 42] All right. Only because you opened the floor then. Mark 5, 18. I want to know what should we say. He says, tell the people what the Lord has done in your life.

And in that way, evangelism for every Christian is just telling people what Jesus has done. So every Christian can speak of forgiveness, a new start, certainty of heaven.

And so I would start there. What the Lord has done in your life. And that testimony is irrefutable. Whereas a lot of modern day apologetics, depending on what people read on the internet, they can just work and manoeuvre around you.

But Mark 5, the story of the demon-possessed man is quite good for that. Yeah. Thanks, Vijay. I guess the list that I was giving before is designed to kind of get our brains more into that space too.

So going to church. So going to church. Keeping an eye out for Christians who do that and help you to do it as well.

[38 : 46] Not everybody is good at that. But there are some Christians here at Holy Trinity I know who are really good at that. Especially the older members of the congregations. They've been walking with Jesus a long time and talk about that a lot.

They're good at it. There are other people who just, they bring it out in you and they talk about it. They're good people to talk about. And to find books. Ask for recommendations for books that will help you think about God's glory and praise.

And read books with other people. Read the Gospels. Read about Jesus and see how he encourages people to talk. Just like Vijay gave us an example.

Lots of things I guess. But I'm not sure if any of those are particularly helpful. One immediate one might be, if we can't talk about God at church, we're not going to do much outside.

So we often, the service leader and so on, often encourage people to talk about what you've learnt from the Bible after the service. But again, you know, it's usually the weekend.

- [39 : 54] How are you going? So if we can't change here, we've got Buckley's out there. So that might be one thing. Start trying to create a culture. Get another person from your congregation and go, right, every week we're going to start asking three people.
- What they heard, what they think, what God's done, that sort of stuff. So maybe you could start a revolution. Hello, Andrew.
- Hi, how are you going? I'm good. On the topic of holiness, 1 Corinthians 7, verses 13 to 15 talk about holiness. Do you want me to read the verses out?
- Yeah, please. It says, If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he can sensibly live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband.
- Otherwise, your children would be unclean. But as it is, they are holy. But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases, the brother or sister is not enslaved.
- [41 : 01] God has called you to peace. So how does holiness work in this sort of passage and context and situation? Yeah, that's a good question, isn't it?
- Here's what I think. So, Paul, when he talks about being Jewish, right, he says, you know, in one sense, only people who trust in Jesus are the true Israel now.
- And yet he also says that Jews have an advantage in some sense. There is still some kind of blessing associated with belonging to the physical descendants of Abraham.
- And it'll be fantastic in Romans 11 when they become Christians. I think what he's saying there is that there is something like that blessing associated with those who belong to Christians.
- And it's not just, it doesn't just work through the patriarchal line now. It works through wives and mothers as well. In other words, the blessing that comes from Jesus and even kind of radiates out through physical, you know, familial connections, is real and shouldn't be despised.
- [42 : 28] It's not the same as being a Christian, but it is a real blessing. And I mean, it makes sense, doesn't it? I mean, we can see that just in kind of ordinary ways because if you have a parent who's a Christian, one parent who's a Christian, they are likely to be praying for you and taking you to church if they can.
- And you'll be seeing a Christian, what it means to live as a Christian in some way. So there are kind of blessings and holiness that kind of radiate out from Christians through natural families still.
- Hi, Andrew. My question relates probably more to last week and you alluded to this passage in Exodus 33. I've got to teach this at Sunday school this week. Okay. So very real to my thinking about trying to explain who God is to young children.
- Chapter 33, verse 11, just after Moses has come back and the people have been worshipping the golden calf, talking about the tent of meeting, the Lord would speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks with his friend.
- Then Moses would return to the camp. And yet just further down, when Moses asked to see God's glory, he says, you can't see my glory, hides him in the cleft of a rock and puts his hand over his face.
- [43 : 52] How do I explain that to young children? Yeah. I think it's all, it just is, it's showing how Moses has a much closer relationship with God than the rest of the people of Israel.
- But even he doesn't see much of God. I think that's what it's saying. So in one sense, compared to everybody else, he gets to see God face to face. But if we're talking about how much he really knows of God, then even he, in the same chapter, is told, no, you can't see my face and live.

So they're just ways, different ways of saying, of talking about how much we know of God. And of course, that's when we get to John 1, as I read last week, you know, nobody has seen God.

So the revelation of God that Jesus brings is so far ahead of any of that stuff that it's as if even Moses, he didn't see anything of God.

It's only with Jesus that we really have a good word, a clear word from God. Any other questions? All right, well, thank you very much, Andrew.

[45 : 11] We'll get you out of the hot seat. Why don't we close our time by saying the grace, which I've just got Mark to quickly type up just for some of our younger members.

So I think it's on the next slide. Is that right? Yep. Why don't we say it together? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen. I think some pastors need to learn it too. Thanks so much for joining us and look forward to seeing you next week. And Sunday, in between.