

## Getting to Know the God of Unfailing Love

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1. Defining the problem: when we encounter difficulties, we often struggle to make sense of God's love. We cry out in frustration:

*Where are you God?  
Does God really love me?*

2. Defining the Hebrew word *hesed* (unfailing love)

- *Hesed* describing humanity:

Proverbs 20:6      Many claim to have *unfailing love*, but a faithful person who can find?

Hosea 6:4          Your *love* is like the morning mist, like the early dew that disappears.

- *Hesed* describing God:

Exodus 34:6-7      The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in *love* and faithfulness, maintaining *love* to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Romans 5:6, 8      You see at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly...God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- Beginning a journey, and a "theme search" of *hesed*:

Psalms 90:14        Satisfy us in the morning with your *unfailing love*, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

### 3. Connecting to Scripture

- As we look at the biblical story, psalms are an easy place to begin to connect our own stories with stories of Scripture. There we find that we are not alone; that others share similar hardships and ask the same kinds of questions.

Psalm 13:1–2      How long, Lord? *Will you forget me forever?*  
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and *day after day* have  
*sorrow in my heart?*

Psalm 17:1        Hear me, Lord, *my plea is just*; listen to my cry.  
Hear my prayer—*it does not rise from deceitful lips.*

Psalm 25:16–17   I trust in you; do not let me be put to *shame*.  
Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am *lonely and afflicted*.  
Relieve the *troubles of my heart* and free me from my *anguish*.

Psalm 31:9–10    Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in *distress*;  
My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my *soul and body with grief*.  
My *strength fails* because of my *affliction*, and my *bones grow weak*.

Psalm 44:23–24   Awake, Lord! Why do you sleep?  
Rouse yourself! *Do not reject us* forever.  
Why do you hide your face and forget our *misery and oppression?*

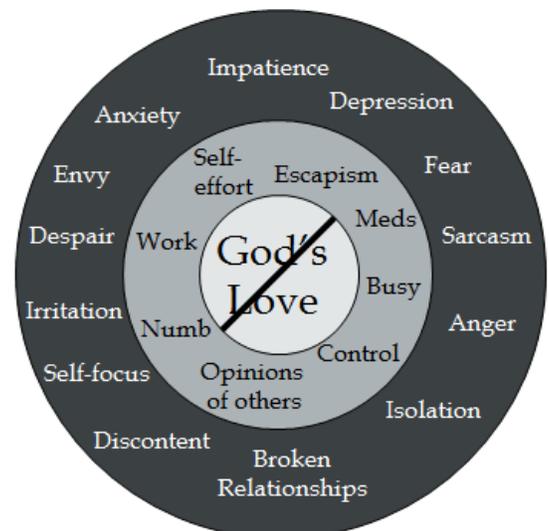
- God’s *hesed* (unfailing love) shows up 127 times in Psalms. When people are most honest in their struggles, their laments, God shows up again and again as the God who will never leave them or forsake them.

### 4. Often, the experience of God’s unfailing love remains elusive.

- Trite answers do not satisfy.
- We turn to other things that do not satisfy, often making things worse.

Psalm 4:2        How long will you people  
turn my glory into shame?

How long will you love delusions and  
seek false gods?



Jeremiah 17:5–8 This is what the Lord says:  
 “Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh  
 and whose heart turns away from the Lord.  
 That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see  
 prosperity when it comes.  
 They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no  
 one lives.

“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him.  
 They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the  
 stream.  
 It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.  
 It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”

5. God’s purposes are deeper than saving us from our circumstances—they are relational.

- His promise of *hesed* (unfailing love) is woven throughout the biblical narrative to woo us into the deepest, most dependent relationship with him.

- The book of Hosea

Hosea 2:19–20 I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion.  
 I will betroth you in faithfulness....

Hosea 2:16 In that day, declares the Lord, you will call me ‘my husband’; you will  
 no longer call me ‘my master’.

- Fulfillment in Christ

John 3:29 The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the  
 bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears  
 the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete.

- God himself invites us to relate to him as our Bridegroom.
- Do we approach him with the joy and anticipation each day of seeing our best friend?

6. God's purposes are outward focused, not just inward.

- As we are transformed through our marriage to Christ, unfailing love ought to be born in us, and by its nature, begin spilling over to others.

John 15:9, 12      As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love... My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.

- Paul continues Jesus' ministry of loving others as he spreads the gospel message to the rest of the world.

Ephesians 3:17–18 I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

Philippians 1:9      This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

Colossians 1:3–5      We always thank God...when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven.

7. Conclusion

- As counselors, or in any people-to-people ministry, this is a crucial calling. We have to play our part in digging in deeply to experience God's unfailing love, so that we can authentically extend it to others. If we are not experiencing God's unfailing love ourselves, do we really have what it takes to help others?

1 Corinthians 13:1–2 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

- Loving others well is risky and costly, as demonstrated by Christ himself. But only as we do so, crying out to God ourselves for help in the process, will we become more Christ-like ourselves in experiencing and extending *hesed* to others.
- Are we up to the challenge? What are we doing to get to know the God of unfailing love more deeply? In the parable of the persistent widow, we are reminded that God will always be faithful, practicing *hesed*, unfailing love. Will he find the same in us?

Luke 18:7–8 Will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

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