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## Gospel Threads

### Week 2: The Character of God

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**Key Question:** *How can we weave truths about God's character and attributes into our everyday conversations?*

#### Review: Why "Gospel Threads?"

- **God's Word commands us to make disciples.**
  - Disciples Receive & Believe the Gospel (Delight)
  - Disciples Display the Gospel
  - Disciples Declare the Gospel
- **Evangelism is Not an "Event", but a Way of Life**
- **Overcoming Obstacles:** How can we overcome obstacles to evangelism consistently and habitually?
- **Active and Passive Fields** – There are many "fields" of evangelism in which we can proclaim the gospel. They can be grouped into two categories:
  - **Active Spheres:** We intentionally alter our life to be around non-believers.
  - **Passive Spheres:** We engage with non-believers in everyday settings.
- **The Key:** *We need to develop habits of intentionality in our speech and actions that open pathways to share the gospel.*
- **The Method: Weaving Gospel Threads**
  - **The Threads:** Gospel themes.
  - **The Fabric:** Our everyday lives.
  - **The Needle:** Our obedience to display and declare.
  - **The Process:** Keep weaving threads until a door opens to take the next step.
  - **The Goal:** Share the gospel as an overflow of your already-established connection and friendship.

# Gospel Thread #1 - The Character of God<sup>1</sup>

- **Why Focus on the Character of God?**

- God is the reward of the gospel.
  - **Revelation 21:3** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God."*
- God is the creator and author of the gospel.
  - **Hebrews 12:2** *[Let us look] to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*
  - **John 10:29-30** *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. 30 I and the Father are one."*
  - **1 John 4:9** *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*

- **Attribute 1: God is Holy.**

- God's holiness is one of his defining characteristics.
  - **Isaiah 6:3** *And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!"*
  - **1 Peter 1:16** *Since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (Citing Leviticus 19:2)*
- God's holiness means:
  - ...that he is completely unique in his separation as creator.
  - ...that he is the only morally pure being.
- God's holiness should motivate us to worship him.
  - **1 Samuel 2:2** *"There is none holy like the Lord; there is none besides you; there is no rock like our God.*
  - **Psalms 96:9** *Worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!*
- God's holiness must permeate our description of him, otherwise we present a distorted picture.
- **Question:** In what ways might we accidentally distort the holiness of God in our words and actions?

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<sup>1</sup> Lesson material for this thread leans heavily on the material provided in David Platt's book, "Gospel Threads". You can download a free PDF of this book here: <https://radical.net/book/gospel-threads-2/>

- **Attribute 2: God is Just.**

- Flowing from the holiness and perfection of God is his absolutely perfect justice.
  - **Proverbs 17:15** *He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.*
  - **Psalms 89:14** *Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; steadfast love and faithfulness go before you.*
- God is judge, and will execute justice for sin.
  - **Romans 2:6-8** *He will render to each one according to his works: <sup>7</sup> to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; <sup>8</sup> but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*
- All people have fallen short of God's holy standards.
  - **Romans 3:23** *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*
- As a result, Scripture presents a tension: How can a just God look at guilty sinners and call them innocent?
- **Question:** Why might God being just appeal even to non-believers?

- **Attribute 3: God is Gracious**

- If holiness and justice were God's only attributes, there would be no hope for sinners.
- God's grace is the disposition in the heart of God to do eternal good to those who deserve eternal condemnation. (Paraphrase of Andy Davis' definition of God's grace).
  - **Titus 2:11** *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people...*
  - **Ephesians 2:8** *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...*
- World religions are built on actions, rules, regulations, and life patterns intended to earn the favor of God (or gods). The good news of the gospel is that God does not require anything to earn his favor, for there's nothing we can do to earn his favor.
  - **Titus 3:5** *[God] saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...*
- **Question:** What are some ways we can point to God's grace in our everyday speech?

## Weaving the Thread of God's Character

- Acknowledge the glory of God in creation whenever you can and how his character impacts your life. *Examples:*
  - God is working in my life (in this way).
  - God has blessed me by his grace (in this way).
  - God is leading/guiding me (in this way).
  - God is teaching me (this truth).
  - God is showing me (this realization).
- **Talk about His Holiness.**
  - Speak about God with reverential awe.
  - Speak about yourself with genuine humility.
  - Draw attention to attributes that distinguish God from people in this world.
  - Draw attention to ways in which God reigns above the gods of this world.
- **Talk about His Justice.**
  - Express confidence in God before others even when things go wrong.
  - Express remorse before God and others when you do something wrong.
  - As you work for justice in the world, speak about the Judge of the world.
  - As you observe evil and suffering in the world, speak with hope about the world to come.
- **Talk about his Grace.**
  - Constantly point out evidence of God's grace in and around you.
  - Consistently credit God as the source of everything good in and around you.
  - Continually acknowledge your need for God's grace.
  - Unceasingly express your gratitude for God's grace.

## Case Studies for Consideration

- **Getting Coffee in the Break Room.**
  - Scene: You're in the break room at work on Monday morning. You're getting coffee, like many others at your work. You don't know specifically who you'll bump into, but it's likely you'll at least see someone.
  - **Discussion Question 1:** What are some questions you could be prepared to ask intentionally to people you see that may help you weave the thread of God's character? Come up with 3.

- **Discussion Question 2:** What are some intentional answers you could prepare to questions you commonly get from acquaintances at work in this setting? Think of 3.
- **Moms at the Playground.**
  - Scene: You're a mom with kids, and you're at the playground with the kids. There are other moms around, some sitting at benches, others standing near the slide. Your kids are well-behaved...for now!
  - **Discussion Question 1:** How might you start a normal conversation about your kids that paves the way for sharing the grace of God in your and their lives? Think of at least 3.
  - **Discussion Question 2:** In what ways could interactions with your kids at the playground intentionally display the character of God that might be surprising to another parent present? How could discipline even serve this purpose?
- **Waiting for the Teleconference to Begin.**
  - Scene: You work from home, and spend a lot of time on conference calls with co-workers. You've just clicked the Zoom link a little early, and you see three work acquaintances have done the same, but you find they're complaining about a recent policy change made by company leadership that negatively affects them and you.
  - **Discussion Question 1:** How could you respond in a way that demonstrates the justice of God in your life and situation?
  - **Discussion Question 2:** What could you say that demonstrates an optimism rooted in the grace of God in your life?

## Lesson Summary

- It's important to make the character of God clear in evangelism, both in our words and deeds.
- Specifically, we can introduce God's holiness, justice, and grace as avenues to express the gospel.
- Opportunities abound to respond counter-culturally, rooted in the presence and power of God's holiness, justice, and graciousness in our lives.
- We can weave aspects of God's character into our conversations as a starting place for ongoing discussion through intentional questions and intentional answers.

*"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."*

**John 14:26**