



"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

Psalm 42:1-2

CENTERPOINTE CHURCH

2019

40 DAY DEVOTIONAL

WEEK 1

EXPERIENCE GOD INTRODUCTION

It is a wonderful privilege to call Northern Virginia our home. Living close to the most influential city in the world provides opportunities and resources unimaginable to most of the world. There is steady and healthy employment available, one of the highest per household incomes in the country, some of the finest universities, and enough tourism to keep us entertained. The list goes on and on. If you can keep up the pace, you can achieve the American dream.

Living the American dream can be exhilarating, but it can also leave your spiritual and emotional life depleted. Soon, we find ourselves running on empty.

I usually pay attention to the gas gauge in my car and fill up when I get below a quarter of a tank. Several years ago, I got so caught up in what I was doing that I lost track of the gauge. My car sputtered and slowed down to a stop, and I was completely clueless as to why. I was upset at the car and the mechanic who I recently paid. I pulled off to a side street and presumed to try and start my car several times before becoming aware that I was simply out of fuel. The warning signs were all there. The gauge was on empty, and there was a red light on next to the gauge that said "empty." It was embarrassing, but I had to call Esther so she could bring me a can of gas. In front of all my fellow Rt. 50 travelers, I put enough gas in to get to the closest filling station.

If we are not paying attention to our spiritual lives, we will one day find ourselves like I did in my car – running on empty. Perhaps you are already there. You don't know how it happened, the warning signs were all around you, but you got too caught up in the busyness of life to respond.

The good news is that God wants to respond to our emptiness. He is calling us to pull over. He wants to fill us up with his presence and bestow grace, love, joy, peace, rest, healing, and power.

Centerpointe Church is dedicating the first 40 days of 2019 to concentrated prayer and spiritual renewal. We are creating space for God to do a deeper work in us, so He can do a greater work through us.

Some of us will be reminded of who God is and reflect on how God has met us in the past with His sustaining love and faithfulness. Others of us will discover new things about God's character, which will cause us to worship Him in a more profound way.

This season will also be a time for us to take an honest look at our lives and allow the Spirit of God to transform us into the people he desires us to be. We will have the opportunity to reflect on each lesson, pray over specific areas, and make practical, life-changing decisions.

Consider fasting during this time, as it sharpens our focus on God for the purpose of drawing near to God. What you fast is up to you. If physically able, fasting food is highly recommended. You may choose to fast for three days, one day, every other day, or one meal a day.

Many people during this time will choose what is called a "Daniel Fast." For more information on Daniel Fasts, go to www.danielfast.com. If you cannot go without food for a week, consider giving up something else that you value. Consider also refraining from television and other distracting media so that the Lord can purify your mind.

This devotional is divided into six weeks, which are connected to the Sunday messages. The first three weeks will focus on "Experiencing God." As we discover who God is, it will draw us to love Him more. The last three weeks focus on Jesus, the Church, and the Holy Spirit.

Life groups are available during this study. They will take us deeper as we talk about our lives and learn in the context of an authentic community. Life groups will focus on the messages from Sunday and our individual studies.

My prayer for you is that you will have a fresh experience with God and enjoy the abundant life He has for you.

Passionately Following Him, Inviting You to Join Me,

Pastor KL

JANUARY 1 – EXPERIENCE GOD AS FATHER

Scripture:

Romans 8:15,16, "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children."

John 1:12-13, "Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

Thought:

As I have shared in previous messages, I grew up without a father. Throughout my childhood years, I remember every day wishing I had a dad like all of the other boys: a dad to play catch with, go fishing with, talk about girls with, buy a car with, etc. Although my godly mother made sure I grew up with father figures around me, it did not completely fill the empty place inside. I heard it once said, "Growing up without a dad is like being lost in the woods without a map." I found this to be true as I tried to figure things out on my own.

One day, I came across the passage in Romans that says our spirit cries out, "Abba, Father." Somewhere in the notes section of the Bible, I discovered that "Abba" is the intimate word for Father, like the relational word "Daddy."

I had a relationship with God, grew up in the church, and accepted Jesus as my Savior as a child, but after reading the Romans verse, something filled the empty place. I discovered our Heavenly Father is relational, not just a detached being out in space somewhere. I did not need to feel alone anymore because he was with me. I could not reclaim the past, but I could embrace my new understanding of God as Abba Father.

Some people grew up in a home where having a relationship with God was based more on rituals than relationship. It was more about fulfilling a duty to earn God's pleasure, following rules and regulations. A relationship is different in that it is based on receiving God's love rather than earning God's love. It has boundaries like all relationships, but the premise is love.

Moving from religion to relationship is a far leap in some people's hearts, but given time, God will make himself real to each of us.

REFLECTION JAN 1

Would you say your concept of God is based more on religion or relationship?

What does it mean to know that God is "Abba Father?"

How is God like a father to you?

Do you struggle with the concept of God as Father? If so, why?

Prayer:

Decision:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying to you, what decisions do you need to make?

JANUARY 2 – EXPERIENCE GOD’S LOVE

Scripture:

Ephesians 3:17-19, “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Romans 8:38–39, “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thought:

Apostle Paul uses the phrase, “to grasp”, or “to apprehend.” This comes from an old and common verb, “to lay hold of effectively.” It is his prayer that we might grasp God’s love through experience, not just intellect.

Paul goes on to say we are, “to know this love that surpasses knowledge.” In other words, “I want you to know something that is beyond your intellect. All of us know how you can feel something without fully comprehending it. A baby feels his mother’s love, but what does a baby understand about a mother’s love? He cannot comprehend love, but he experiences it in miraculous ways. In the same way, a child of God does not have to understand all of God’s love in order to experience it, and as we grow in our relationship with Christ, the mystery of God’s love continues to overwhelm us.

Let the love of Christ wash over you today like water washing over your hands, cleansing you. Let his love remind you that no matter what, you can never escape His extravagant, unconditional, undeniable, and unfailling love.

REFLECTION JAN 2

What does it mean to dwell on God’s love?

In what ways have you experienced God’s love?

What other metaphors describe God’s love?

Prayer:

Decision:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying to you, what decisions do you need to make?

JANUARY 3 – EXPERIENCE GOD’S GRACE

Scripture:

Ephesians 2:8–9 NIV “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.”

Thought:

The Greek word for “grace” is the noun *charis*, referring to an unmerited favorable disposition toward someone or something. It is commonly used in relation to salvation, especially in Paul’s writings to explain that salvation comes from God’s own choice to show favor in redeeming lost persons through faith in Christ.

At the moment of salvation, you did not simply *surrender* your life to Jesus. You also *received* his grace, and although this grace was freely given, it did come with a great price. God’s grace cost the life of His son Jesus, who died on a cross for our sins. You didn’t earn it and you don’t deserve it. Grace is an offer of what we do not deserve.

Andy Stanley says in his book, *The Grace of God*, “To say that someone deserves grace is a contradiction in terms. You can no more deserve grace than you can plan your own surprise party. In the same way that planning voids the idea of surprise, so claiming to deserve voids the idea of grace. You can ask for it, and plead for it, but the minute you think you deserve it, the grace you think you deserve is no longer grace. It is something you have earned. But grace can’t be earned.”

The only proper response to the gift of God’s amazing grace is receiving it through faith. Like a gift at Christmas, it must be received in order for the transaction to be complete. Grace is God’s provision, and faith is our part.

As simple as this revelation is to fully grasp and understand, there are those who still think they have to try and earn their way into heaven by doing as many good works as possible. This thinking leads to misery because they never know for sure if their works are enough.

REFLECTION JAN 3

Sit back and take in God’s amazing grace today. Worship him with this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jbe7OruLk8I>

Think about the grace of God in your life when you first accepted Christ. What did it mean to you then and now?

Prayer:

Decision:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying, what decisions do you need to make?

JANUARY 4 – EXPERIENCE GOD’S MERCY

Scripture:

Ephesians 2:4–5, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Thought:

As a teenager, I received a few speeding tickets, and on one occasion was invited to a court to explain myself before a judge. There was no getting around the fact that I was guilty. I knew it and the judge knew it. I admitted my guilt and asked the judge to extend mercy, which he granted. I didn’t deserve pardon, but I experienced the judge’s mercy.

Throughout the book of Psalms, we read the phrase, “have mercy on me, oh Lord.” The psalmists knew they deserved punishment yet they pleaded for mercy, which is also translated “compassion.” The good news is that God is rich in mercy, and because of this, his wrath does not consume us.

Mercy is closely connected to grace in a sense that both are the foundation of forgiveness. Neither is based on merit, but both are received as gifts from God. Like grace, mercy from God is never deserved and is always generated by His character. Salvation is God’s merciful act of withholding His wrath and eternal punishment as well as His grace in granting forgiveness and eternal life.

Mercy is unique in that it is sometimes translated as “compassion” or “pity.” Jesus was moved with compassion and showed mercy when he encountered the hurting, sick, or downcast.

It is interesting to note that mercy is extended from the larger to the smaller, the rich to the poor, the strong to the weak, and the righteous to the sinner. God, who is completely holy, extends mercy to us as sinners.

REFLECTION JAN 4

In what areas of your life have you received mercy?

Where do you need to extend mercy toward others?

Prayer:

Decision:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying to you, what decisions do you need to make?

JANUARY 5 – EXPERIENCE GOD’S FAITHFULNESS

Scripture:

Psalms 100: Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Lamentations 3:22–23, “Because of the LORD’S great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Thought:

Some people add value to everyone around them and they are honored for such things. Some people are known for their generosity, compassion, creativity, care, passion in a certain area, love for education, love for the poor, hope, love of country, etc. But the character trait most admired is faithfulness. This was my grandmother.

My grandmother was faithful to her God, her family, and her church, which meant that we could count on her to demonstrate love and care for us. We could also count on her to share the love of God and speak well of her church. There was something steadfast about her, which made her home a safe place to be.

One of the favored character traits about God in scriptures is faithful. “Faithful” in Hebrew means, “steadfast in affection or allegiance,” “firm in adherence to promises or in observance of duty.” The psalmist continually comes back to the sure thing – the truth of God’s faithfulness, so much so that he mentions 32 times. We will never have to wonder about God’s faithfulness.

What does this mean for us?

First, we can celebrate God’s faithfulness and give him praise like the Psalmist who wrote, “I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness” (71:22). Secondly, we can share it with those around us. Psalm 40:10 says, “I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly.”

REFLECTION JAN 5

Name a time when God demonstrated his faithfulness to you.

In what way can you celebrate God’s faithfulness?

Who can you share God’s faithfulness with?

Prayer:

Decision:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying to you, what decisions do you need to make?

For further reflection on God’s faithfulness, read:

Psalm 33:4; 36:5; 86:15; 89:8; 117:2; 119:90; 146:6

JANUARY 6 – SUNDAY MESSAGE NOTES

Scripture(s):

Key Thought(s):

Notes:

Application:

REFLECTION JAN 6

What parts of the message were particularly significant to you?

Decisions:

Based on what you have read and what God is saying to you, what decisions do you need to make?

Prayer: