

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*

# GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH 2025 WOMEN'S SUMMER STUDY

*Written and Taught by Brandy Eldridge and Melani Grone*

*Graphics by Brandy Eldridge*





## GOD NEVER CHANGES

The Scriptures speak of a God who does not change. Like the tallest mountain peak on the horizon, from generation to generation, God stands unchanging, immutable, anchoring the landscape of human existence as all else around him ebbs and flows, blossoms and withers, waxes and wanes. The Rock of our salvation endures. The sunshine and shadows of human circumstance may reveal certain contours of his character one day and different ones the next, but his character remains fixed. His plans remain steady. His promises remain firm. In an ever-changing world, he is the unchanging reference point upon which the inner eye fixes to determine the direction that leads to home.

- Jen Wilkin

**A foundational Christian belief is that the Bible contains God's story, in which He reveals Himself and the purposes toward which He has been working since the beginning of time.** The words were written by humans operating under the inspiration of God, and so it is God's Word, divinely guided every step of the way. That is to say, Scripture has one author: God. Additionally, though the Bible records many events in human history and tells of the people who experienced them, it is all woven together through an overarching primary focus on God and His actions. In other words, Scripture has one main character: God.

## ALL ABOUT HIM

*The Bible is one story, with God as the author and the main character.*

# IN THIS STUDY, WE WILL SEEK TO MORE DEEPLY KNOW THE AUTHOR AND MAIN CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE'S BIG STORY

God desires that we know Him, and the Bible is a primary means through which He has chosen to communicate about Himself. Through Scripture, God tells a story that unfolds across all of human history. How He interacts with and directs His creation and humanity throughout that story testifies to His character. **No matter where we drop into the Bible we will be able to get to know God better though what He has revealed of Himself there.** Scripture can play a key role in correcting misunderstandings we may hold about God and His character.

## GETTING TO KNOW GOD

*All of God's acts are  
consistent with His  
attributes. No attribute  
contradicts the other, but  
all harmonize and blend  
into each other in the  
infinite abyss of the  
Godhead. All that God  
does agrees with all that  
God is, and being and  
doing are one in Him.*

*-A. W. Tozer*

Sometimes the Bible will be straight-forward in describing God, such as when the prophet Joel recognizes the LORD as “gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love” (Joel 2:13). At other times, symbolic language is used, such as when God’s strength and protection are referred to through speaking of Him as a fortress (Psalm 46:7). Still another way God’s Word reveals His character is through His actions. **What God does is in harmony with who God is; He will not act in ways that are inconsistent with His character.**

One of God’s key characteristics is that He does not change. Both the Old and New Testaments are clear on that point. For example, Malachi 6:1a reads, “I the LORD do not change.” Similarly, Hebrews 13:8 reassures that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Therefore, **what we learn about God in one part of the Bible remains true when we learn something else about Him in a different part.**

Because God does not change, we must avoid falling into the trap of thinking He is fundamentally different or has somehow shifted in purpose, intent, or character at various points of biblical history. **Through studying Scripture in its entirety, we build nuance in our understanding of who God is.** Each new story, chapter or book of the Bible gives us the opportunity to deepen our appreciation for how each facet of His character interacts with and supports the others.

By journeying throughout the entire expanse of Scripture, we develop a more complete and well-rounded understanding of God’s character and purposes. **As we know and appreciate Him more fully, we are able to more effectively comprehend and live out our place in His plan.**

# THE BIBLE'S BIG STORY

There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this story.

-Sally Lloyd Jones

From beginning to end, the Bible is telling one big story, a grand narrative into which every smaller story is woven. Though a clear and concise summary of this story can be challenging to provide, a good starting place is the version produced by scholar Michael D. Williams: "God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it."

The way in which God moves His story forward from brokenness to restoration unfolds over a series of key developments. For the purposes of this study, we will use the following milestones to summarize the grand narrative of the Bible. A pictorial representation of this can be found on page 38.

## CREATION

God creates the world and everything in it. He creates humanity in His image and places them in a garden in which they can flourish in productivity and enjoy relationship with God, each other, and creation.

## FALL

Humanity chooses rebellion over obedience to God, and so sin enters the world, bringing death and brokenness along with it. There is rupture of the harmonious relationships in the created order.

## COVENANT

God makes a series of promises to humanity that establish His desire for them to again be in right relationship with Him and spell out what it means for those who follow Him to be His people.

## KINGDOM

God brings His chosen people to the land He promised to them, and there they struggle with the desire to rule themselves instead of allowing God to be in charge. They desire a human king more than God's rule. God establishes a royal line and promises His chosen one will rule forever.

## PROPHETS

God calls special messengers to speak truth to the world, reminding them that He is the only true God. God's people are called to live righteously and turn away from idolatry and all other evil. A Messiah is promised, one who will rescue the world from the consequences of the fall.

## CHRIST

The promised Messiah, arrives in the form of God's Son, Jesus, who came from heaven to earth as fully God and fully man. He saves sinful humanity by creating the needed pathway for them to return to right relationship with their righteous and holy God.

## GOSPEL

The followers of Jesus obey His command to spread the Good News of God's salvation to the entire world. Recognizing Jesus as the chosen King, God's people strive to enact His Kingdom priorities on earth now as they await His return.

## ETERNITY

Though God tarries because He desires as many people as possible to come to repentance and join His Kingdom, an end to all things will come. At that time, God will judge humanity; those who are found to be following Christ will receive eternal life to dwell in His Kingdom in the presence of God. Those without Christ will be forever separated from God.

## STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY

**Please prayerfully and honestly consider how much time you can dedicate to the homework portion of this study and make a plan that carves out space for it.** If that is 10 to 15 minutes, trust that the Holy Spirit knows your limitations and can still do everything He wants to in your heart during that time. If you can commit 5 hours, trust that the well will not run dry, and the Holy Spirit will make it time well spent. **No matter what you and God agree to regarding the time you will set aside for the study, we pray that your hearts would rejoice as they seek the LORD (Psalm 105:3).**

This study is designed to encourage reflection on the character of God as it is revealed through His actions in Scripture. In preparation for the teaching each week, you will read and reflect on a section of Scripture in which God is active in ways which may seem at first to be contradictory or difficult to reconcile. For example, in the first week we will examine the story of God flooding the earth while He preserves humanity through Noah's family. How can God both create and destroy? What do these actions reveal about His character? Each week's homework is meant to help face questions such as this head on, trusting that God wants us to know and understand Him more deeply and lead us to better knowledge of Him. Throughout the study, feel free to make use of the list of God's attributes on page 39.

**Proper knowledge of God involves taking Him at His word, without discarding, neglecting, cherry picking, or overemphasizing any one component of what He has revealed of Himself in Scripture.**

When God acts in unexpected or seemingly inconsistent ways, it is an invitation for us to dig more deeply into what He is communicating about Himself and His purposes. Often, we are encouraged to do our best to hold two aspects of God's endeavors in tension, understanding that He alone can faultlessly balance both sides of the coin because of His perfect and unchanging character.

The tensions we explore in this study are usually difficult for humans to hold, as we tend to be more comfortable with one component of God's activity than with the other. We love when God intervenes to provide healing, but struggle to understand when instead He waits. Similarly, we may pray for God to keep His promise for blessing in our lives, without remembering that He has also promised consequences when we exhibit unfaithfulness to His commands. **As the study progresses, our prayer is that delving more deeply into God's character and capacity to hold such tensions in perfect harmony inspires us to increased wonder and praise for who He is.** Additionally, we aim to develop stronger faith that is better able to withstand difficulties or times in which God does not act in the way we would prefer.

## STUDY GOALS

- 1. Build a more accurate view of who God is*
- 2. Gain confidence in working through biblical tensions that at first seem incompatible*
- 3. Better understand where we fit into God's big story*

# STUDY SCHEDULE

Week One - A Sovereign God Creates and Destroys.....	6
Week Two - A Redeeming God Frees and Constrains.....	11
Week Three - A Relational God Directs and Allows.....	16
Week Four - A Faithful God Punishes and Preserves.....	21
Week Five - A Good God Intervenes and Waits.....	26
Week Six - An Intentional God Permits Persecution and Cultivates Flourishing.....	31
Final Reflection - God of Grace and Truth.....	36





## A SOVEREIGN GOD CREATES AND DESTROYS

When we say that God is Sovereign we affirm His right to govern the universe which He has made for His own glory, just as He pleases. We affirm that His right is the right of the Potter over the clay, i.e., that He may mold that clay into whatsoever form He chooses, fashioning out of the same lump one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor. We affirm that He is under no rule or law outside of His own will and nature, that God is a law unto Himself, and that He is under no obligation to give an account of His matters to any.

- A. W. Pink

### SOVEREIGNTY

*God is King over His  
creation, and we are  
accountable to Him as both  
Creator and righteous judge.*

The story of Noah is familiar to many of us. We have heard it recounted numerous times and have lovingly passed it along to our children as they sat on our laps and looked at picture books featuring drawings of animals walking uniformly up a ramp into the ark, two at a time.

This week, let us revisit the well-worn story and view it through the understanding that God is its main character, not Noah. What does this biblical text tell us about God? How can we reconcile the destructive actions He takes with Him as Creator God?

**Read Genesis 6:1 - 9:17.**

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of God that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions God takes in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

Within these chapters of Genesis, God puts on display His awesome creative powers alongside His capacity to destroy what He has made. Use the following chart to identify the acts of both creation and destruction in this text.

CREATION	DESTRUCTION

What purpose do creation and destruction each serve in the text?

How do the acts of creation and destruction both reflect God's sovereignty?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God creates?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God destroys?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God acting to create and destroy? What other evidence is there in Scripture that He is sovereign?

Is creation or destruction more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His sovereignty and reflecting on specific ways in which you can honor Him as such.**

---

## WEEK ONE TEACHING NOTES

---

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK ONE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you are excited about related to this study.
2. What do you think about using “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” as a summary of the Bible’s big story? What changes would you make, if any, and why?
3. How does understanding God as the author and main character influence your approach to Bible study?
4. How does viewing the story through the lens of God’s actions inform your understanding of Noah and the flood?
5. In the teaching, we discussed the thematic links between the story of Noah and the creation narrative earlier in Genesis. What links do you see between this story and other biblical passages?
6. How is God’s sovereignty displayed in Genesis 6:1 - 9:17?
7. What other aspects of God’s character are displayed in this story? Do they also assist in holding the tension between God creating and destroying?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this week of Bible study?



## A REDEEMING GOD FREES AND CONSTRAINS

The image of redemption in the Old Testament is one of God rescuing his people from Egypt, pulling them out of bondage, out of literal slavery. In the New Testament Jesus the Redeemer rescues us from our natural state of being in bondage to sin, of serving ourselves in destructive ways. But God in his great love sent his only begotten Son, who lived a perfect life, died on the cross, and then rose from the dead in order to bring us to him, to redeem us. That's what we mean when we say Jesus Christ is our Redeemer.

- Mark Dever

The second book of the Bible, Exodus, tells of how God delivers His people from slavery in Egypt, where they had suffered under bondage and oppression. Somewhat puzzlingly, however, the first thing He does after they have escaped Phaorah's army is gather them at Mount Sinai so that He can pass down to them a series of laws that dictate how He expects them to conduct themselves. God frees the Israelites from the constraining expectations of Phaorah, only to place them under His own set of restrictions.

This week, let us examine what true freedom means and why it can only be found in the Lord.

**Read Exodus 19:1-20:17.**

### REDEMPTION

*God redeems us to Him, not  
from Him. We are redeemed  
for a purpose, and God's  
constraints show us how to  
live into that.*

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of God that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions God takes in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

Within these chapters of Exodus, God’s mighty acts to free His people from Egypt stand in sharp contrast with the restrictions He places on His people. Use the following chart to identify the places where God frees His people and constrains His people in this text.

FREEDOM	CONSTRAINT

What purpose do freedom and constraint each serve in the text?

How do the acts of freedom and constraint both reflect God's redemption?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God frees us?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God constrains us?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God freeing us and constraining us? Do those places also point to God as our redeemer?

Is freedom or constraint more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His redemption and reflecting on specific ways you can live as His redeemed.**

---

## WEEK TWO TEACHING NOTES

---

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK TWO DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you've learned from the study so far.
2. How do you see the “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” pattern at work in the Exodus passage?
3. How does focusing on God’s actions in Exodus change or support your understanding of who God is?
4. Where else in Scripture do we see God's love and compassion move Him to action?
5. In the teaching, we discussed the idea that all God does is for His own glory. What is one way you would like your life to reflect God's glory more fully?
6. Which side of the tension - freedom or constraint - is easier for you to consider? What is one thing from today's text or teaching that helps you hold those in tension?
7. What other aspects of God's unchanging character do we see in today's text?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this week of Bible study?



## A RELATIONAL GOD DIRECTS AND ALLOWS

If our communion with the Father is by his love, if our communion with the Son is by his grace, and if our communion with the Spirit is by his consolation and comfort, how then shall we respond? With joy and gladness in our hearts, we call out “Abba! Father!” knowing with full assurance from the Spirit that our Father will embrace us as his very own children, redeemed by the blood of his only begotten Son.

- Matthew Barrett

Scripture repeatedly describes God as our Father, indicating that He cares for us deeply and wants what is best for us. Yet we also know that since the time of Adam and Eve, it has been easy to deceive humans into thinking they know what is best for themselves.

Even though God’s people had the opportunity to live in His promised land under His loving guidance, they were discontent and clamored to have a human king, like the nations around them. Why would God, who provides such clear direction in His life-giving law, permit them to go down a path that will be destructive to them?

**Read 1 Samuel 8:1 – 10:27.**

### RELATIONSHIP

*God walks in relationship with humans, both guiding our steps and allowing us to face the consequences of our own choices.*

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of God that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions God takes in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

Within these chapters of 1 Samuel, God warns His people of the consequences that will accompany serving a human king instead of being ruled by God, yet still allows them to have a king. Use the following chart to identify the places where God directs His people and allows them to follow their own way in this text.

DIRECTS	ALLOWS

What purpose do directing and allowing each serve in the text?

How do the acts of directing and allowing both reflect God's relational nature?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God directs us?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God allows us choice?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God directing and allowing choice? Do those places also point to God as our relational Father?

Is directing or allowing more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His desire for relationship with us and reflecting on specific ways in which you can grow in intimacy with Him.**

---

## WEEK THREE TEACHING NOTES

---

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK THREE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you've learned from the study so far.
2. How do you see the “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” pattern at work in the 1 Samuel passage?
3. How does focusing on *God’s* actions in 1 Samuel change or support your understanding of who God is?
4. Where else in Scripture do we see God's relational (or parental, if you prefer) nature on display?
5. In the teaching, we discussed the idea that a key problem for humans is difficulty trusting God deeply enough. What is one way you personally would like to cultivate more trust in Him?
6. Which side of the tension – directing or allowing – is easier for you to consider? What is one thing from today's text or teaching that helps you hold those in tension?
7. What questions do you have about this text that remain unanswered? How do they fit with what we learned about hermeneutics in this session?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this session of Bible study?



## A FAITHFUL GOD PUNISHES AND PRESERVES

Great is thy faithfulness, O God, my Father;  
There is no shadow of turning with thee.  
Thou changest not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
As thou hast been, thou forever wilt be.

- Thomas O. Chisholm

In the prophetic books, God reminds His people of who He is and what that means for the response they ought to have to Him. Too often, His people ignore God or turn away from Him to instead pursue what they think is best.

After a long period of unfaithfulness marked by God's people breaking His most important command by serving other gods, a prophet named Habbakuk has an intense conversation with God. Though Habbakuk knows that faithfulness to God is paramount, he complains about God sending an even more evil people—the Babylonians—to punish the Israelites for their idolatry.

**Read Habbakuk 1:1 – 3:19.**

### FAITHFULNESS

*God is a promise keeper who does exactly what He says He will, bringing about both the blessings and the judgment He has promised.*

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of God that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions God takes (or states He will take) in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

By the end of this prophetic conversation between Habbakuk and God, an understanding emerges that God promises to punish evil and to preserve His people. Use the following chart to identify the acts of both punishment and preservation in this text.

PUNISHES	PRESERVES

What purpose do punishment and preservation each serve in the text?

How do the acts of punishment and preservation both reflect God's faithfulness?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God punishes?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God preserves?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God acting to punish and preserve? What other evidence is there from Scripture that God is faithful?

Is punishment or preservation more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His faithfulness and reflecting in gratitude on how you were deserving of punishment, but by His grace will be preserved.**

---

## WEEK FOUR TEACHING NOTES

---

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK FOUR DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you've learned from the study so far.
2. How do you see the “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” developing across the Scripture passages we have studied so far?
3. How does focusing on God’s words and actions in Habakkuk change or support your understanding of who God is?
4. Where else in Scripture do we see God's faithfulness on display?
5. In the teaching, we discussed how Habakkuk’s conversation with God in chapters 1 and 2 shaped how he prayed in chapter 3. What impacts of the conversation did you notice in the prayer?
6. What is one area in your life where you are like Habakkuk, working to understand how God’s character and your circumstances fit together?
7. Which side of the tension – punishing or preserving – is easier for you to consider? What is one thing from today's text or teaching that helps you hold those in tension?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this session of Bible study?



## A GOOD GOD INTERVENES AND WAITS

When it comes to physical healing, the extremes are relatively easy to see. We have the loony prosperity gospel preachers and their shallow messages of permanent health and wealth for everyone who follows Jesus. Then we have the starchy cynics who think that everyone who claims to have experienced divine healing is either lying or delusional. The first group acts as if God always heals today because the kingdom of God is entirely now; the second group acts as if God never heals today because the kingdom of God is entirely not yet. The biblical picture (to summarize a huge amount of theology in one sentence!) is that it is both now and not yet. We should expect both miracles and disappointments, physical healing and physical death, to form part of our experience until Jesus returns

- Andrew & Rachel Wilson

### GOODNESS

*God works for His own glory  
and for the good of those who  
love Him. However, He does so  
on His own timeline.*

Miraculous healing was a vital component of the divine work Jesus performed during His earthly ministry. Blindness, skin diseases, demon possession, paralysis, and even death—none were too much for the power of Jesus to overcome.

Yet during His time on earth, Jesus did not heal everyone. Likewise, not everyone was equally responsive to His authority and loving call to follow Him. Why would He not just fix everything right away?

**Read John 5:1 – 47.**

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of Jesus that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions Jesus takes in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

In this Gospel account, Jesus demonstrates God’s purposes and timing. Not all the people at the pool were healed, and not everyone responds to His authority. Use the following chart to identify the places where Jesus intervenes and where He waits in this text.

INTERVENES	WAITS

What purpose do intervening and waiting each serve in the text?

How do the acts of intervening and waiting both reflect God's goodness?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God intervenes?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God waits?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God intervening and waiting? Do those places also point to the goodness of God?

Is intervening or waiting more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His goodness and reflecting on specific ways in which He might be calling you to notice His intervention or to keep waiting.**

---

## WEEK FIVE TEACHING NOTES

---

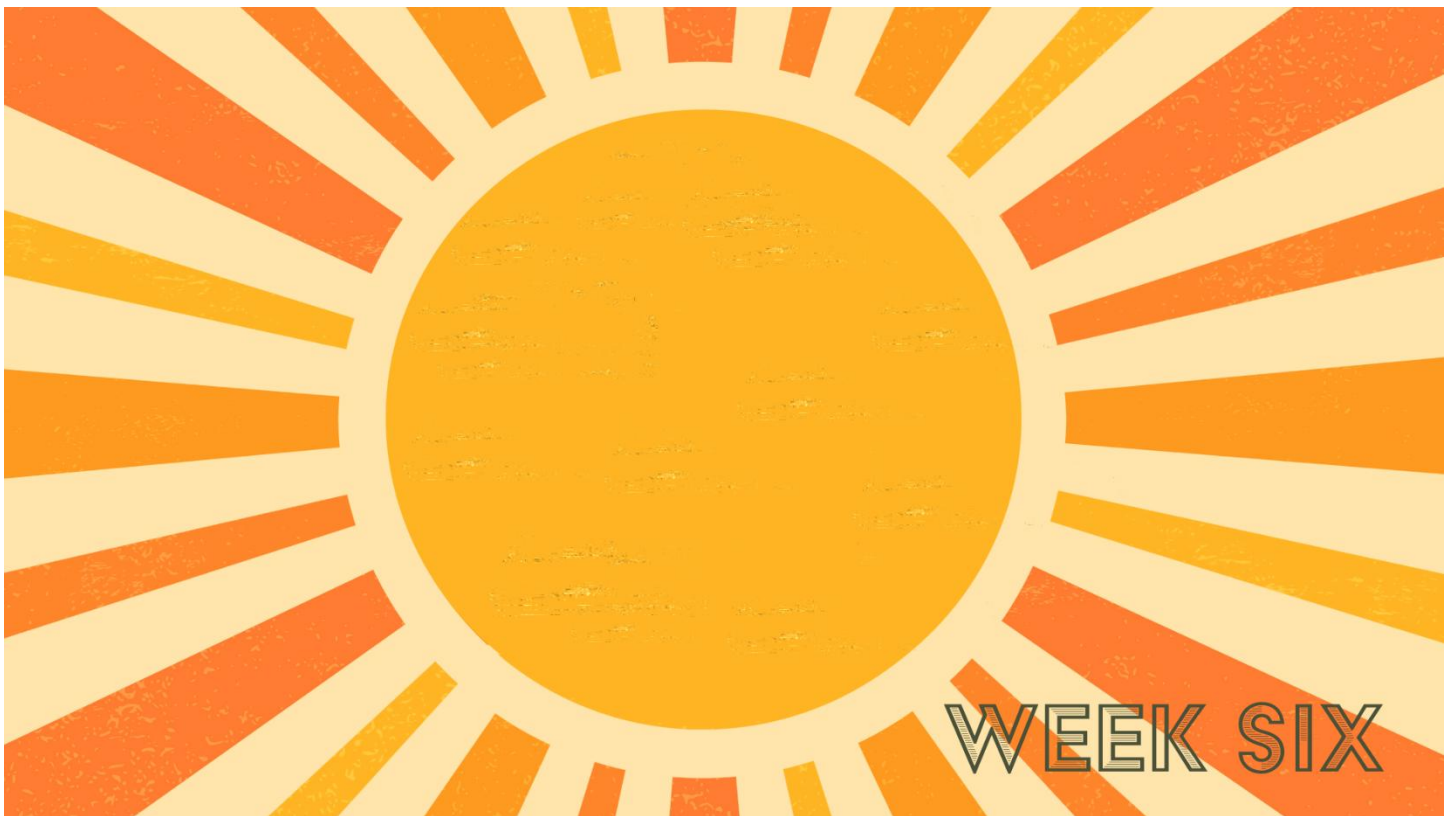
# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK FIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you've learned from the study so far.
2. How do you see the “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” paradigm developing across the Scripture passages we have studied so far?
3. How does focusing on Jesus’ words and actions in John 5 help clarify your understanding of who God is?
4. Where else in Scripture do we see God's goodness on display?
5. In the teaching, we discussed how Jesus prioritizes spiritual health as of primary importance. How might that influence your approach to Him in prayer?
6. What is one area in your life where you are frustrated or confused about God’s decision making about waiting versus intervening?
7. Which side of the tension – waiting or intervening – is easier for you to consider? What is one thing from today's text or teaching that helps you hold those in tension?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this session of Bible study?



---

## AN INTENTIONAL GOD PERMITS PERSECUTION AND CULTIVATES FLOURISHING

---

Cheer up, Christian! Things are not left to chance: no blind fate rules the world. God hath purposes, and those purposes are fulfilled. God hath plans, and those plans are wise, and never can be dislocated.

- Charles Spurgeon

In the book of Acts, we read about the incredible miracles that continued to be worked in the name of Jesus. The Apostles spread the Good News of God's gracious rescue of humanity far and wide. As they do so amazing things happen, not the least of which is the extraordinary number of hearts that are opened to receive God's salvation.

Yet the reception the Apostles received was often less than welcoming. They suffered much for both what they did and what they said. They were jailed, beaten, ridiculed, and even killed. Why would God allow them to suffer so much, when they are doing the good work He asked them to do?

**Read Acts 3:1 – 4:37.**

### INTENTIONALITY

*God is glorified as His church grows, in number and maturity. Persecution and other earthly pushback cannot thwart God's purposes.*

Put the main point of this passage into your own words.

Where in the biblical timeline does this passage fit in? Mark it on the stepping stone path on page 38.

List any characteristics of God that are explicitly identified in the text.

List the actions God takes (or states He will take) in the text. What do they indicate about who He is?

In these chapters of Acts, God displays continuing capacity to bring about flourishing—healing paralysis, adding great numbers to His church. However, His followers also experience significant persecution. Use the following chart to identify the incidents of both persecution and flourishing in this text.

PERSECUTION	FLOURISHING

What purpose do permitting persecution and cultivating flourishing each serve in the text?

How do the acts of persecution and flourishing both reflect God's intentionality?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God permits persecution?

What errors would we fall into if we focused only on how God cultivates flourishing?

What does this text teach us about God?

How does what you learned about God in this portion of Scripture fit with what you have learned about Him previously?

Where else in the Bible have you noticed the tension of God permitting persecution and cultivating flourishing? What other evidence is there from Scripture that God is intentional?

Is persecution or flourishing more comfortable for you to consider? What is one thing you learned from this passage that would help you hold both in tension?

**Take a few minutes to respond to God in prayer, praising Him for His intentional plan and asking Him to reveal more about where your life fits in His ongoing missional work.**

---

## WEEK SIX TEACHING NOTES

---

# THE SAME

*Yesterday, Today,  
& Tomorrow*



## WEEK SIX DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share your name with your group, as well as one thing you've learned from the study this summer.
2. Having completed the study, how well do you think the “God made it, we broke it, Jesus fixes it” paradigm encapsulates the Bible’s big story?
3. How does focusing on God’s words and actions in Acts 3 and 4 help clarify your understanding of who God is?
4. Where else in Scripture do we see God's intentionality on display?
5. What is one area in your life in which you are struggling (or have struggled) to see God bringing about good through His intentional plan?
6. In the teaching, we discussed how Jesus has already inaugurated His Kingdom on earth. How might that influence your approach to living out your faith?
7. Which side of the tension – persecution or flourishing – is easier for you to cope with? What is one thing from today's text or teaching that helps you hold those in tension?
8. What key takeaway would you like to carry with you from what you learned in this session of Bible study?



## GOD OF GRACE AND TRUTH

Grace doesn't come to us and say, "You're fine just the way you are." Rather, it says: "You're totally forgiven and a new creation – now take up your cross and follow me." I find that liberating. I don't want grace that leaves me in my sin with mere forgiveness, amazing as that forgiveness is. I want grace that changes me and calls me into new life, into new surrender.

- Gavin Ortlund

### WHO IS GOD?

*What characteristics of God contribute to His capacity to hold both grace and truth in perfect balance?*

In John 1:14, we are told, "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

Grace and truth are characteristics of God we can emulate. However, we often struggle to keep them in perfect balance, erring either by neglecting grace and being too harsh when we share truth, or by failing to present full truth because we are overly concerned with being gentle and nonjudgmental.

**Using what you have learned in this study, examine the character of God presented in John 1:14. How does He balance grace and truth?**

---

## FINAL REFLECTION NOTES

---

---

# THE BIBLE'S BIG STORY

---



# ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

<b>Immutability</b>	God does not change. He remains consistent in His character, His promises, and His purposes. God is always the same.
<b>Sovereign</b>	God is the supreme ruler over all He has created. He has control over all that happens and is the ultimate source of power and authority.
<b>Redeeming</b>	God not only desires to rescue His creation and humanity, but He is fully capable of doing so. His redemption was accomplished by Christ on the cross.
<b>Relational</b>	God actively chooses to engage in relationship! He is not detached or far away, but instead desires intimate connection with every person.
<b>Faithful</b>	God is trustworthy, reliable, and can be depended upon to keep His promises.
<b>Good</b>	God is ultimately benevolent and kind, slow to anger and quick to extend mercy, forgiveness, grace, and love to those who seek Him.
<b>Intentional</b>	God is deliberate and purposeful. He does not get caught off guard require a “plan B.” He works all things for His glory and the good of those who love Him.
<b>Loving</b>	God is affectionate, loyal, and steadfast in His commitment to His people. His love is an eternal reality that is not contingent on our good behavior.
<b>“The Omnis”</b>	God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent, which means that He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and everywhere all at once.
<b>Eternality</b>	There is no beginning or end in God. He has always existed and will always exist. This makes Him an effective anchor for time bound and mortal humans.
<b>Self-Sufficiency</b>	God does not experience need or dependence on anything outside of Himself. He already has all that He requires, without having to seek it from us.
<b>Holiness</b>	God is morally pure and perfect. There is nothing about Him or His actions that is evil or impure. He is completely separate from that which is unholy.
<b>Merciful</b>	God is compassionate and promises grace to all who seek to follow Him and keep His good and holy commands.
<b>Wise</b>	God’s knowledge is infinite—there is nothing He does not know.
<b>Just</b>	God always does what is right and good. He is more than simply fair—He always upholds what is right and brings punishment for evil.
<b>Gracious</b>	God took the punishment for sin upon Himself, so that anyone who seeks Him can receive eternal life with Him instead of the death that their sin deserved.
<b>Divine</b>	God is supernatural. He is not bound by the rules of the created order, but instead is capable of doing what otherwise would be impossible.
<b>Glorious</b>	God is so awesome and wonderful to behold that we would not be able to gaze upon His face fully and survive the experience.
<b>Jealous</b>	God desires relationship with us and will not tolerate us seeking anything or anyone above Him. His jealousy is not touched by sin, though—it is pure.
<b>Truthful</b>	Nothing God says or does is incorrect or out of alignment with reality.
<b>Immanence</b>	God does not keep Himself separate from or above His creation. In fact, He sent His one and only Son to dwell directly with us!

# QUOTE CITATIONS

Page 1: Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him: 10 Ways God is Different from Us*, (Crossway, 2016).

Page 2: A.W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (HarperCollins Publishers, 2007).

Page 3: Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible*, (Zonderkidz, 2009).

Page 3: Quote obtained from <https://dogmadoxia.blogspot.com/2011/01/whats-message-of-bible-in-one-sentence.html>.

Page 6: AW Pink, *The Sovereignty of God*, available at [https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/sov2015\\_p.pdf](https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/pink/sov2015_p.pdf).

Page 11: Mark Dever, in Hansen, Collin, et al. (eds.). *The New City Catechism Devotional: God's Truth for Our Hearts and Minds*, (Crossway, 2017).

Page 16: Matthew Barrett, *Simply Trinity: The Unmanipulated Father, Son, and Spirit*, (Baker Books, 2021).

Page 21: Thomas O. Chilsom, "Great is Thy Faithfulness." *The United Methodist Hymnal*, (Hope Publishing Company, 1989).

Page 26: Andrew & Rachel Wilson, *The Life We Never Expected*, (Crossway, 2016).

Page 31: Charles Spurgeon, from his sermon entitled *A Basket of Summer Fruit*, available at <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/a-basket-of-summer-fruit/#flipbook/>

Page 36: Gavin Ortlund, from Truth Unites blog, <https://truthunites.org/2011/03/17/bonhoeffer-7-repentance-protects-grace/>