



GOD'S CALL
TO OBEDIENCE

INTRODUCTION TO PART 3
THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

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**“What comes into our minds
when we think about God is the most
important thing about us.”¹
A.W. Tozer**

God's Call to Obedience

INTRODUCTION: THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

INTRO

Introduction to Part Three: The Gospel and Our Relationship With God

In *Part One: The Gospel and Our Relationship With Others*, you learned how to forgive those who have sinned against you and how to seek forgiveness from God and others. This is necessary because of sin that is a result of the Fall. The gospel changes all of your relationships, including your relationship with God and your relationship with others, and should now reflect the reality of your new life in Christ.

In *Part Two: The Gospel and Our Relationship to the Fall*, you looked at the specific ways the fall has impacted your system of beliefs and the self-protective strategies you developed. You discovered the heart issues that are keeping you from living an obedient, surrendered life and began to identify the unbelief, pride and fears that motivate your desire and demand to control your world on your terms.

Hopefully, you have reconciled many of the key relationships in your life and have begun to view life from God's perspective, seeing the call to suffer as a follower of Christ. To continue to grow in your love for God and others, you must develop greater dependence upon Him. That is why *Part Three* is so important!!

In *Part Three: The Gospel and Our Relationship With God*, you will examine your view of God and establish what is necessary to continue walking with Him in His power with His resources as you pursue His Kingdom and His righteousness. As you gain understanding of what it means to walk with God on His terms, you will also identify the many perceived rights, which may have become your demands in your kingdom. In an attempt to have these demands met you often turn to idols instead of to God for their fulfillment.

How you respond to the problems and difficulties in your life reveals your view of God and your understanding of the Gospel.

Unbelief in the character of God can quickly lead to the pursuit of idols. The source of all idolatry is *self-worship*: "I am god!" As "god" of your kingdom, you believe you are the authority of what is needed in your life to make your kingdom work. This wrong focus is the source of what lead to the *Cycle of Self-worship*. This "cycle" describes your response when your "demands" are not met and your idols let you down or are taken from you.

The Cycle of Self-worship begins with your **desires** which may be godly or sinful. Perhaps without your awareness of these desires, you add the wrong belief that "**I deserve**" that these desires be met in my way and in my timing. The gospel reminds you that you deserve

God's wrath and anything less than that is the expression of His grace! Even if your desires are legitimate, you do not deserve that these be met – nor are they necessary for you to be a whole, fulfilled person.

However, once you believe you deserve that these desires be met, they will quickly turn into a **demand**. You will then have the expectation that your circumstances will align with your desires. You expect God and others to respond in ways to ensure those demands are met and your kingdom continues to function on your terms. You then begin creating, pursuing and maintaining idols that you believe are the means to meet the demands and expectations. *All of this is built around worshipping yourself and building your own kingdom.*

This will naturally lead you to become **disappointed** – people fail you and circumstances happen that are out of your control. The idols in which you put your trust to build your kingdom have failed to produce what you demand. Expectations may have become “rights” or “needs” because you view them as necessities for your emotional well-being or for your emotional survival. A judgmental, negative and critical spirit can become your response to your failing kingdom.

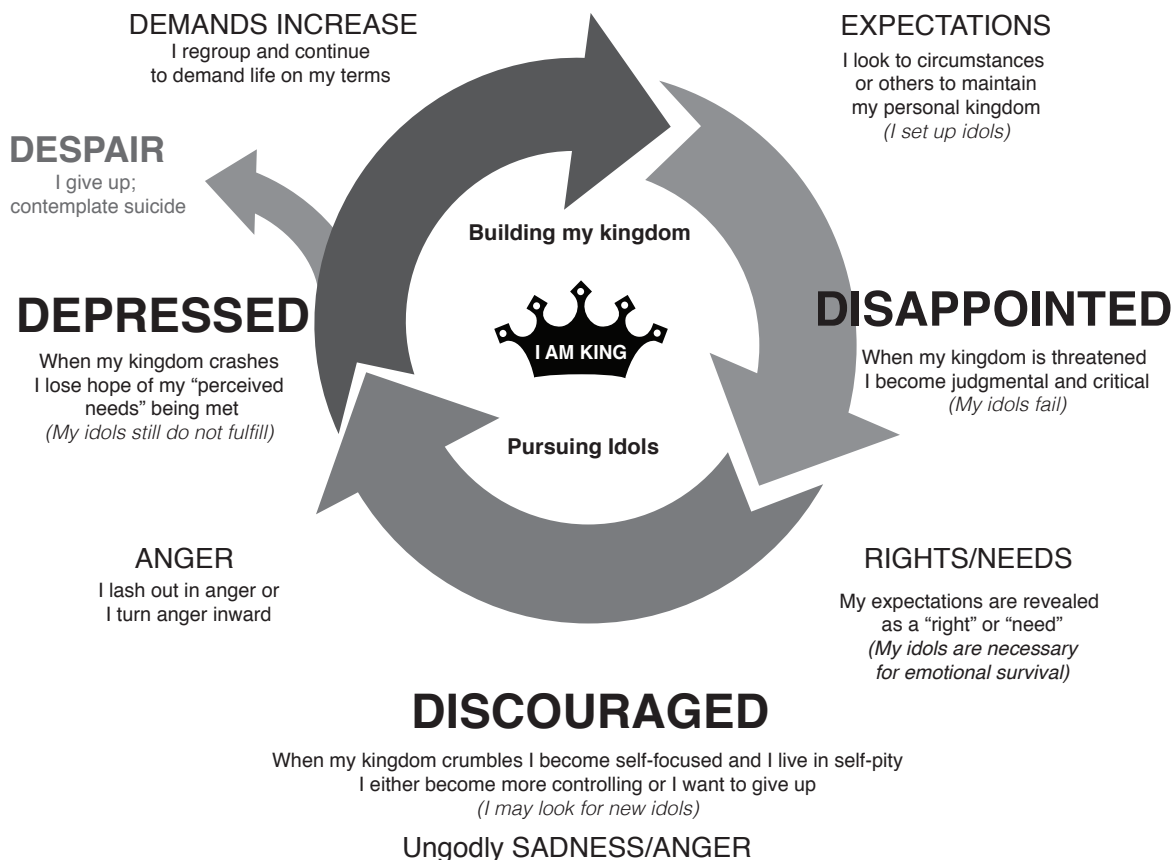
When disappointments are not faced biblically you become **discouraged**. Your kingdom begins to crumble and the result is often a growing self-focus, self-pity and self-absorption. You may become more controlling to make things happen or you may want to give up trying to rebuild your world. You may even seek new idols to replace the failed ones. Ungodly sadness, sorrow or self-pity may rule your heart and anger (expressed inwardly or outwardly) is often the outcome. In your discouragement you often view life as unfair so you blame others, your circumstances and even God that your kingdom is failing.

This sense of loss often leads you to become **depressed**. Your kingdom crashes, and you lose hope for your perceived needs, entitlements and rights being met by God, others, self or circumstances. The pursuit of and dependence upon your idols has led to a “dead end.”

“You either give up in **despair** or you continue to repeat the cycle, only this time you **increase your demands**.” Your present kingdom is hopelessly shattered. So you may resort to giving up completely and even contemplate killing yourself. Or you may avoid despair by trying to “regroup” with new idols or even greater demands of the people and circumstances, including even God, to try and achieve some semblance of control over your world. The Cycle of Self-worship continues and leads to greater disappointment, discouragement and depression.

CYCLE OF SELF-WORSHIP

**I DESIRE
+ I DESERVE
= I DEMAND**



It is possible to break out of this Cycle of Self-Worship. The desires that are sinful must be renounced and rejected. You may have legitimate desires and expectations that are pleasing to the Lord which still go unmet. Rather than focusing on the disappointment that they are not being fulfilled, look to God, anticipating that His Kingdom will advance regardless of your circumstances or the actions of others.

Understand that even as we pursue righteousness in God's Kingdom, **disappointment** is to be expected because we still live in a fallen world full of fallen people. You must realize people and circumstances will fail your expectations, and your desires and plan for your life may not be fulfilled. God, in His wisdom of knowing what is best for you, may say "wait" or "no" to your desires. As you delight in Him, He may change your desires in accordance with His. Deal with these pressures by trusting in the goodness of God and persevering in obedience for His glory. (Ps. 37:3-6)

The study included in this book, *When Rights Are Wrong*, will guide you in relinquishing rights, perceived needs and all demands to the Lord's control.

When you preach the gospel to yourself daily, you are reminded that you have been given mercy, forgiveness and grace, instead of the wrath you deserve.

Being reminded of the truth of the gospel helps you begin to experience **contentment** in the midst of even great disappointment. Focus on the glory, greatness, goodness, and graciousness of Christ, the King. Understand that suffering is used for His Kingdom's goals: to glorify Him, to know Him, to purify and grow you in godliness and to fit you for His eternal purposes.

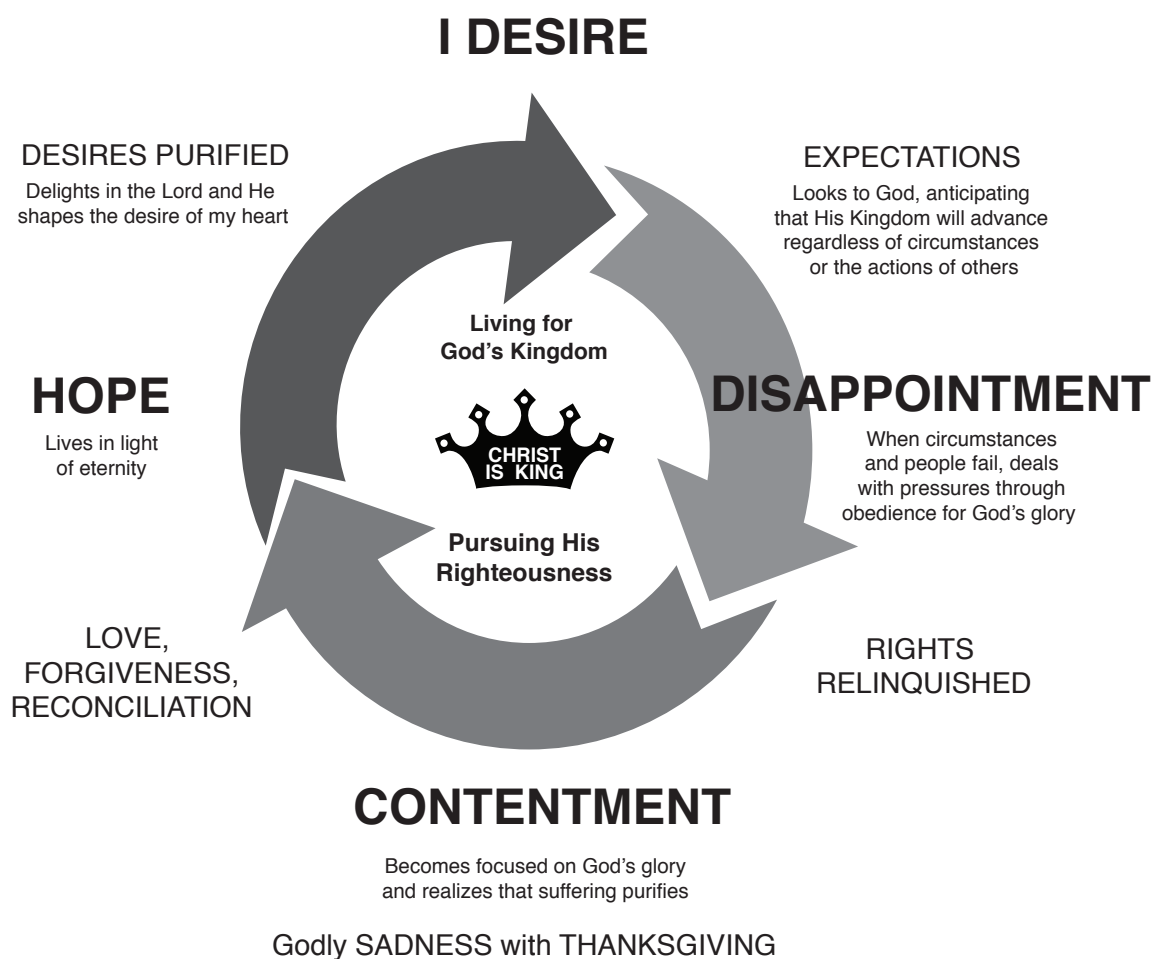
You may still experience godly sadness, sorrow and grief in the midst of the affliction, but now it is *seasoned with thanksgiving*. This allows you to reach out to others, even those who are difficult and disappointing, with **love, forgiveness and reconciliation**.

Hope is now a reality. You see the bigger picture of how you fit into The Story of God and you live in the light of eternity. You receive ongoing sustenance and encouragement from the Scriptures which cause you to rest in the sovereign control of your King. As your Sovereign Creator, you know that He is working *all* things for your good and His purposes. (Rom. 8:28,29)

You must realize that you will continue to have many desires in your time on earth. But by placing your trust in God you can release **godly desires** to Him. Pray for your submission to God's timing in fulfillment, your desires to be aligned with God's desires and your acceptance if He says "no" to your godly desires. You will often need to abandon demands to know *why* He hasn't fulfilled your godly desires. To keep your focus on God and continue in the *Cycle of God-Worship* you will need to:

- Lean on His precious promises. (2 Pet. 1:4)
- Remember all the ways that God has proven His faithfulness in the past. (Deut. 8:2)
- Wait on Him with anticipation of how He will reveal Himself and bless you in the midst of unmet desires and the resulting pressures, hardships, voids, losses and sorrows.
- Rejoice and remember to thank Him when He grants your requests.

CYCLE OF GOD-WORSHIP



Thinking Rightly About God

The Gospel corrects your sinful beliefs about God's character and also corrects your thoughts about what you really deserve. This is necessary so you can worship Him rather than yourself. Thinking rightly about God brings satisfaction and contentment because He is "better" than what any idol can offer you. A right view of God should point you to appropriating the wonderful variety and sustaining power of His spiritual blessings and glorious riches. This will require laying a whole new foundation of thinking biblically about God.

As you grow in living a more surrendered, dependent life, you will experience the power of God to deal with sin, love difficult people and face painful situations with grace and gratefulness.

Every problem you create in your life is the result of a wrong view of God or a wrong view of the gospel.

You must lay a new foundation of thinking biblically about God. This involves more than knowing only the facts about Him, but knowing Him relationally. (John 17:3; 2 Pet. 1:3)

“WHAT I THINK ABOUT GOD IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT ME...I BELIEVE THERE IS SCARCELY AN ERROR IN DOCTRINE OR A FAILURE IN APPLYING CHRISTIAN ETHICS THAT CANNOT BE TRACED FINALLY TO IMPERFECT AND IGNOBLE THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD.”²
A.W. TOZER

“Thus says the Lord, ‘Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord who exercises loving-kindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,’ declares the Lord.”
JER. 9:23-24 NASB

Your life must be built on a solid biblical foundation of right thinking about who God really is. In the book *You Can Change*, Tim Chester points us to the truth that God is glorious, great, gracious, and good.

God is Glorious:

God's glory refers primarily to His majestic beauty and splendor and the recognition of it by mankind. He deserves that all glory be given exclusively to Him. Therefore, life is not the story about you – it is the unfolding story of God revealing Himself and establishing His Kingdom.

- All of life and creation is about the glory of God. (1 Chron. 16:23-32)

“ IT IS NOT ABOUT YOU AND MAKING YOUR STORY BETTER, BUT ABOUT WAKING UP TO THE INFINITELY BIGGER GOD STORY HAPPENING ALL AROUND YOU. AND GOD’S INVITATION TO YOU TO JOIN HIM IN IT. IT’S ABOUT LOOKING UP TO SEE THAT THERE’S A STORY THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON LONG BEFORE YOU ARRIVED ON THE PLANET AND ONE THAT WILL GO ON LONG AFTER YOU’RE GONE. GOD IS THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF THIS STORY...HE COMMANDS CENTER STAGE IN EXISTENCE, CREATION, TIME, LIFE, HISTORY, REDEMPTION, AND ETERNITY.”³

LOU GIGLIO

- You are to do everything to put Him on display and bring Him the glory only He deserves. (1 Cor. 10:31)

“ SEEING HIS TRUE FAME MAKES ME WANT TO LIVE FOR A BIGGER PURPOSE, DOING EVERYTHING I DO IN SUCH A WAY AS TO SHINE THE SPOTLIGHT ON HIM... LIVING FOR GOD’S GLORY IS NOT SO MUCH ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS IT IS ABOUT DOING WHATEVER YOU DO IN SUCH A WAY THAT IT REFLECTS JESUS CHRIST TO THOSE AROUND YOU AND ULTIMATELY POINT PEOPLE TO HIM.”⁴

LOU GIGLIO

Because God is glorious, you should fear Him above everything and everyone else. He is the center of the story!

God is Great:

“ To whom, then, will you compare God? What image will you compare him to? He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, and its people are like grasshoppers. He stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in. He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing. No sooner are they planted, no sooner are they sown, no sooner do they take root in the ground, than he blows on them and they wither, and a whirlwind sweeps them away like chaff. ‘To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?’ says the Holy One. Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name. Because of his great power and mighty strength, not one of them is missing. The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.”

Is. 40:18,22-26,28

James MacDonald points out that “God’s awesomeness takes you to your knees in total reverence, to worship without self-consciousness and to walk in glad surrender.”⁵ God’s *greatness* is seen through a number of His attributes:

He is Holy. (Is. 6:1-8)

Holiness is the characteristic of God that sets Him apart from His creation. The fact that God is holy should control the way you think and the way you live. A glimpse of God’s holiness shows you who He is and who you really are. Until you get a glimpse of the holiness of God you will not understand your severe need of His grace.

Yet, God calls you to “be holy, as He is holy.” God saved you to change you and to “set you apart” to be like Him and serve His eternal purpose. Your “small” view of God has produced little sense of your need to be holy as well as an insensitivity and indifference to your sinfulness.

“UNTIL WE HAVE SEEN OURSELVES AS GOD SEES US, WE ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE MUCH DISTURBED OVER CONDITIONS AROUND US AS LONG AS THEY DO NOT GET SO FAR OUT OF HAND AS TO THREATEN OUR COMFORTABLE WAY OF LIFE. WE HAVE LEARNED TO LIVE WITH UNHOLINESS AND HAVE COME TO LOOK UPON IT AS THE NATURAL AND EXPECTED THING.”⁶

A.W. TOZER

He is Majestic. (Is. 40:10-11,25-26)

“GOD IS MORE MASSIVE THAN OUR WILDEST IMAGINATION, BIGGER THAN THE BIGGEST WORDS WE HAVE TO DESCRIBE HIM. AND HE’S DOING GOOD TODAY — SUSTAINING GALAXIES, HOLDING EVERY STAR IN PLACE, STEWARDING THE SEEMINGLY CHAOTIC EVENTS OF EARTH TO HIS CONCLUSION WITHIN HIS GREAT STORY.”⁷

LOU GIGLIO

On one hand, God is not at all like us. We cannot even begin to comprehend His power and might. This should produce a healthy *fear* or *awe* of who He is which should change how we live and how we view ourselves. (Is. 40:26) John Calvin writes, “Men are never duly touched and impressed with a conviction of their insignificance, until they have contrasted themselves with the majesty of God.”⁸

On the other hand, God is near to His children and cares for us deeply. You can rest in the reality that God knows, God cares and God is in control!! (Is. 40:11)

He is Sovereign. (Dan. 4:35)

“SOVEREIGNTY MEANS GOD IS IN CONTROL OF IT ALL. HE’S OVER THINGS WE SEE AND THINGS WE DON’T SEE. STUFF WE UNDERSTAND AND STUFF THAT IF WE EVEN GLIMPSED IT FOR A SECOND WOULD BLOW US AWAY. SOVEREIGNTY MEANS IT’S ALL HIS. NOTHING CAN STOP WHAT HE PURPOSES FROM HAPPENING. NOT

PEOPLE, EVENTS, OR TIME. GET IT? WHAT GOD PLANS, HE DELIVERS. WHAT GOD WANTS, GOD GETS—HIS WAY AND HIS TIMING ON TIME, EVERY TIME.”⁹

JAMES MACDONALD

In your desire for control, you want a God who is manageable and with Whom you can be comfortable. You don't want a god who is the ruler of all, answers to no one and can accomplish whatever he wants—in all things.

You must understand that a loving, sovereign God orchestrates and ordains all the circumstances of your life for your good and His glory. (Rom. 8:28-30)

God always knows what is best and He never makes a mistake. It is crucial to come to grips with the sovereignty of God, otherwise you will continue to see yourself as a victim of your painful past, difficult people or ongoing trials.

“WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T TRULY TRUST GOD'S SOVEREIGN CONTROL? YOU MIGHT TRY TO TAKE CONTROL YOURSELF IN HARMFUL WAYS, THROUGH MANIPULATION OR DOMINATION. YOU MIGHT WEAR YOURSELF OUT WITH BUSYNESS OR FRUSTRATION. YOU MIGHT MAKE YOUR SECURITY AND WEALTH A BIGGER PRIORITY THAN GOD'S KINGDOM (LUKE 12:22-31). OR YOU MIGHT WORRY (PHIL. 4:6-7). WE BECOME PREOCCUPIED WITH THE BILLS, AND MONEY BECOMES OUR MAIN OBSESSION. ALL BECAUSE WE DON'T BELIEVE OUR FATHER KNOWS WHAT WE NEED.”¹⁰

TIM CHESTER

Because God is great – you don't have to try to control the people and circumstances in your life. He is in control!

God is Gracious:

“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. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

EPH. 2:4-7

He shows you mercy. (Micah 7:18-20)

Mercy designates that quality in God by which He faithfully keeps His promises and maintains His covenant relationship with His chosen people despite their unworthiness and unfaithfulness. It is evidenced in that God does not give you what you deserve and promises to never hold your sin against you. It is because of mercy that the wrath of God is appeased.

He gives you grace. (Eph. 2:8-9)

You can do nothing to earn God's favor. God's love is totally unconditional: your performance does not influence God's love for you. It is because of His unconditional election that He has saved you – it is His unwavering grace that keeps you!! You did nothing to earn this grace and you can do nothing to keep it. God's grace to you is the result of Christ's work on your behalf. He performed perfectly and satisfied the demands of a holy God.

He grants you forgiveness. (Ps. 103:10-12)

God forgives you all of your past, present and future sins. Mercy is not giving you what you deserve; grace is giving you what you don't deserve. You do deserve Hell; instead you have been granted forgiveness and the promise of eternity with God in heaven.

The forgiven must forgive. Because you have been given mercy, grace and forgiveness you are to forgive and forbear with others, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Col. 3:12-14)

**Because God is gracious – you don't have to perform
for Him or anyone else for love, forgiveness
and acceptance. His love is secure!**

God is Good:

“The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.”
Ps. 145:8-9

He is loving, compassionate and patient. (Ps. 119:68)

Out of His patient love, He forbears with you. Out of His great compassion, He cares tenderly for you, providing all that you need. Therefore, life's blessings and adversities are designed by your loving Father to conform you into the likeness of Christ.

He is faithful. (Lam. 3:22,23)

The faithfulness of God can be defined as His "unimpeachable reliability" – what He says He will do – 100% of the time. His faithfulness is never ending and endures forever. His faithfulness is also often connected to His compassion and loving-kindness.

- He is faithful to fulfill all His promises. (Ps. 100:5)
- He is faithful to fulfill His purpose in saving you. (1 Thess. 5:24)
- He is faithful to forgive. (1 John 1:9)
- He is faithful in the midst of temptation. (1 Cor. 10:13)
- He is faithful in the midst of suffering. (1 Pet. 4:19)
- He is faithful even when we are not. (2 Tim. 2:13)

He is the very definition of "good."

- All good things come from Him. (Jas 1:17)
- He will provide all that you need. (Ps. 84:11; 2 Pet. 1:3-4)

Only God satisfies in a true and lasting way. He is better than anything the world offers. If you look for satisfaction or fulfillment, meaning or identity, anywhere other than in Jesus, you'll be left empty.

“ALL THAT EMANATES FROM GOD—HIS DECREES, HIS CREATION, HIS LAWS, HIS PROVIDENCES—CANNOT BE OTHERWISE THAN GOOD.”¹¹
ARTHUR W. PINK

Because His goodness endures forever, you should never be discouraged: *“The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him”* (Nah. 1:7). Because He is faithful, you can trust Him and surrender the difficult circumstances and difficult people in your life to Him, knowing that He has eternal purpose behind everything that comes into your life.

Because God is good – you do not need to look for life in anything else. He can be trusted!

Your goal is not about finding worth in yourself, gaining acceptance from others or pursuing a life full of possessions or pleasure.

“WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE? FIRST, WE NEED TO NURTURE OUR TRUST IN GODS’ GREATNESS, OUR FEAR OF GOD’S GLORY, OUR DELIGHT IN GOD’S GOODNESS, OUR LONGING FOR GOD’S FUTURE, OUR REST IN GOD’S GRACE. SECOND, WHEN WE FACE TEMPTATION WE NEED TO SAY NOT ONLY ‘I SHOULD NOT DO THIS,’ BUT ALSO ‘I NEED NOT DO THIS.’ WHEN TEMPTED TO ENVY ANOTHER’S POSSESSION, WE SAY NOT ONLY ‘I MUST NOT ENVY,’ BUT ALSO ‘I NEED NOT ENVY BECAUSE I HAVE CHRIST.’ WHEN TEMPTED TO WORRY WE SAY NOT ONLY ‘I MUST NOT WORRY,’ BUT ‘I NEED NOT WORRY BECAUSE GOD IS IN CONTROL.’ WHATEVER SIN OFFERS, GOD IS BIGGER AND BETTER...TO SAY TO TEMPTATION, ‘I MUST NOT DO THIS’ IS LEGALISM. TO SAY, ‘I NEED NOT DO THIS BECAUSE GOD IS BIGGER AND BETTER’ IS GOOD NEWS.”¹²

TIM CHESTER

Part Three: The Gospel and Our Relationship With God is designed to help you maintain a vital relationship with God by correcting some of the areas where you are not thinking biblically about Him. As you put God in His rightful place you will begin to be overwhelmed that He loves you. This should produce brokenness and gratefulness in response to your loving, gracious Father. Loving Him more intensely is what should produce a greater desire to obey Him. A growing, intimate relationship with God is necessary to continue on the path of obedience as your life unfolds. God wants to transform you from the inside out. He has given you all the resources necessary to experience life with Him and to live a life for Him and His glory.



THE **4G'S**

God is...	Fruit of Belief	Fruit of Unbelief	Jesus
GLORIOUS "I don't need to fear anyone or anything"	Fear God HUMILITY "I am NOT"	Fear man/circumstances PRIDE "I am"	SUPREME Jesus is GOD
GREAT "I don't need to be in control"	Submission (to the Creator)	Control (act as the creator) people/circumstances	SOVEREIGN Jesus is LORD
GRACIOUS "I don't need to prove myself"	Forgiveness (of others)	Judgemental (always superior)	SAVIOR Jesus has performed for us
GOOD "I don't need to look for satisfaction anywhere else"	Contentment (in all things)	Anxious (never satisfied)	SUFFICIENT Jesus is a gift to us He is all we need