

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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**SERMON:** *Abounding in Love and Faithfulness*

**SERIES:** *What's in a Name?*

**SCRIPTURES:** *Exodus 34:5-7*

**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*

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*\*Credit to "God Has A Name" (John Mark Comer); "Old Testament Word Studies" (William Wilson); John Ortberg (Various sources); Cassuto (Exodus Commentary);*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

We are in the fourth week of our sermon series... **(SERMON SERIES GRAPHIC)**...

"What's in a Name?"

We've turned to a popular passage of Scripture, found in Exodus 34...where God tells us His name, what he's like.

And again, just want to give credit to the author John Mark Comer for his book, "God Has A Name"...in helping us work our way through this passage.

And you've been challenged to memorize, meditate, to think on this passage of Scripture. Get in your brain, know it by heart...quote it each day as a reminder about who God is. So let's read this together, but by next week you should be prepared to say it by memory!

**Exodus 34:5-7 - <sup>5</sup> Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. <sup>6</sup> And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> maintaining love to thousands, and**

**forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”**

Each week, we're taking a look at some of the phrases God uses to describe Himself.

**“The images used to speak about God not only decisively determine the way one thinks about God they have a powerful impact on the shape of the life of the believer.”** (Fretheim)

What you believe about God, impacts how you live.

This morning we want to take a closer look at the phrase...

**...abounding in love and faithfulness...**

## **I. The Hebrew**

So let's start with these two Hebrew words and what exactly they mean.

In Hebrew abounding **love = hesed** and **faithfulness = emet**.

God is hesed emet.

Now these two words are intended to be together...paired together...mashed together. They are intentionally linked because they describe each other. In fact, the pairing of these two words is found all over your Bible, hundreds of times actually!

**Psalm 89:1-2 – <sup>1</sup> I will sing of the LORD's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. <sup>2</sup> I will declare that your**

**love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.**

And I think you'll see this connection as we work our way through the sermon, ok?

### **A. Hesed = love**

There is no great English equivalent of this word, because we use the word love for all kinds of things. I love, my wife, Jenny and my kids. But I also love chocolate milkshakes, San Francisco 49ers, the smell of bacon, green grass with no dandelions or clover, summer evenings sitting out on the back deck looking out over the farm fields and watching the sun go down, early morning runs along the beach, with sun rising over the ocean, the cool ocean breeze on my face and the smell of salt water. We love in so many different facets of life.

In our world love can sometimes be an emotion or feeling. But in Hebrew there are multiple words for love. But hesed is more of a **steadfast love**. It's a commitment, it's on-going, almost like a stubborn kind of love...that says, I'll love you, even when you're being unlovable.

Our daughter Adalyn (**PIC OF ADY & SHAUN**), just celebrated her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday yesterday and there are times when loving her comes so easily. She'll sit down beside me on the couch and lay her head on me, and she'll look up at me with those big blue eyes, and smile with those big dimples. Or sometimes when I'm listening to my corny old country music love songs,,she'll let me pick her up and dance with her. And all you feel all over your body is love for this little human being, it's so easy to love her in those moments.

But then there are these other moments, she'll ask if for lunch she can have a chocolate cupcake with ice cream (**PIC OF ADY WITH SWEET TREATS**), piled high with chocolate syrup and whipped cream, sprinkles and a candy bar for dessert. The

girl loves her some sugar. And as a good parent, you have to say, *“No. You need to eat something healthy for lunch and then we can talk about dessert.”* But saying no as a parent is so hard. And those big blue eyes, become filled with tears, and those cute little dimples disappear and that sweet little voice turns into wails of anguish and that simple fuzzy feeling/emotion of love isn't there.

And in those moments, I need a different kind of love, I need a committed, stubborn determination to will the absolute for this little human being, so she can grow into the healthy young lady we want her to be. And so in those moments I have to have hesed, steadfast love.

God is abounding in hesed love.

### **B. Emet = faithfulness**

Literally the word means truth. It's kind of cool, it is related to the word for “amen.” Kind of like, when you know something is absolutely true, the preacher says something you affirm, you say AMEN! Or when he's coming to the end of the Sunday sermon...you say “Amen”. “The final word, that settles it...mic drop.”

But perhaps the best way to understand emet is our phrase...

**“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”** It has this quality of perseverance to accomplish the task...to the end, to the amen. There's a toughness, grit to hang in there with this word.

It's a word that we like, but that we don't often see emulated in our world. When things get tough, we're ready to quit or go do something else.

**“If it’s no longer easy or fun or novel, when it’s difficult or uncomfortable or boring...we just leave. We leave jobs, cities, churches, friendships, marriages.”**  
(Comer 284)

The Hebrew word emet means, God doesn’t. He’s not a quitter.

Can you see the similarity between these two words? And when hesed (steadfast) and emet (faithful) are brought together like this, it’s a description of God’s incredible loyalty to His people. He will never, EVER abandon his people...he will be faithful, to the bitter end, no matter the cost.

And is perhaps best demonstrated in the phrase “covenant loyalty.”

### **C. Hesed + Emet = Covenant Loyalty**

The Bible is divided into two sections, isn’t it? The first part is called the “Old Testament” and the second part is called the “New Testament”. But the word testament literally means covenant or agreement. The Story of the Bible is really a story about a covenant or commitment between God and humans.

And all throughout the story, God remains hesed emet, steadfast and faithful to his commitment to his people.

The closest thing we have to this covenant loyalty in our world are wedding vows (**PIC OF SHAUN AND JENNY WEDDING**). Now that’s a stud if I ever saw one. I feel like my entire life could be summed up by the haircuts I’ve had over the years.

Marriage begins with a promise. In a world of change and instability, there is one sacred certainty. These life-time promises.

I promise to forgive you. Be patient with you. Honest with you. And I promise all of these things with hesed emet. “Steadfast love and faithfulness.”

In the good and the bad. Richer or poorer. Sickness and health. But for how long, until when...Until it get's really hard. Until we have too many disagreements. Until I'm not happy.

No...I'll love you, When you are young and beautiful and the air is filled with the scent of Channel and when you are old and your teeth are gone and the air is filled with scent of Bengay...you can count on these promises.

Until...death parts us...the amen.

That is covenant loyalty.

Sadly, for many in our world today, wedding vows are just part of the tradition of a wedding ceremony not the actual intention of the couple. But not so with God. He has made a covenant with humans that he intends to hang onto to the bitter end, until death, and even beyond.

Let me share one Bible story about God's hesed emet. There's a fascinating short book in your Bible, it's one of the prophetic books...**Hosea**. If you've never that book you should read it.

Right at the outset of the story, God gives this bizarre command to Hosea...no joke, this is right out of your Bible, read?

**the LORD said to him, “Go, marry a promiscuous woman and have children with her, for like an adulterous wife this land is guilty of unfaithfulness to the LORD.”**

But it doesn't stop there. Hosea listens. He marries a promiscuous woman named Gomer. They have children. Then, not surprisingly she cheats on him, she is unfaithful and she runs away.

In the story, Gomer represents the nation of Israel, who continually breaks covenant with God. And in a larger sense she represents humanity...us. Hosea on the other hand represents God in the story.

Listen to what happens...then...

**The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites...”<sup>2</sup> So I bought her for fifteen shekels<sup>[a]</sup> of silver and about a homer and a lethek<sup>[b]</sup> of barley.**

God tells Hosea to go and find his cheating wife, buy her back, remarry her and love her unconditionally....

God says, now if you can picture that...you'll be starting to understanding who I am...my hesed emet, my “abounding love and faithfulness” to you.

And don't you see that's the story of Jesus. Jesus is the real life representation of God's hesed emet.

For God so loved the world, when we were unfaithful, disobedient, cheaters...he loved them/us so stubbornly and faithfully, he sent his son to buy us back...til death parts us and beyond.

Because that's who God is, He is abounding in love and faithfulness.

I'll just tell you sometimes when I hear these Bible stories again, it's enough for me to just pause and say "How great is our God."

Now if that's what God is like...

## **II. So what?**

Let me suggest two responses to God's hesed emet.

We have a responsibility to be...

### **A. Faithful to God.**

When we talk about becoming a Christian or a follower of Jesus. We're talking about making a commitment to God, joining with God in covenant loyalty. Hesed emet towards God first and foremost.

There's a great line that Paul writes to the Corinthian Church.

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 - <sup>19</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; <sup>20</sup> you were bought at a price.**

We have this habit of mixing our loyalties sometimes.

God becomes just one of many loyalties in life, alongside of: family, wealth, entertainment, country and etc...add whatever is you want to the list.

And our commitment to God is not hesed emet, steadfast and stubborn, instead it becomes convenience. So long as he fits my schedule and doesn't really interfere with my life too much I'll be a follower.

But when I said my wedding vows I didn't say, "Jenny, you'll be one of many. And only in those moments when I feel like it or when you're lovable. Only the days when it's convenient. In those times when you do something nice for me."

No, you say, "for better or worse, sickness and health, good and the bad, until we are parted by death", I am committed to you.

Following Jesus, requires your hesed emet...a steadfastness, a grit, a toughness, when the going gets tough, the tough get going. When loyalties begin competing for, our time, our resources, our commitment, our allegiance...God must be first...amen/mic drop.

Very practically here's what this means:

The words you choose to speak are so important. They are not your own, you don't just get to say whatever you want to say. Your words must now reflect someone who is faithful to God first and foremost.

This is why the images you put in front of your face are so important. Because your eyes are not your own. They must reflect someone who is faithful to God.

Your attitude. Not your own.

The author Richard Rohr says it like this: ***Christians are usually sincere and well-intentioned people until you get to any real issues of ego, control, power, money, pleasure and security. (Going gets tough). Then they tend to be pretty much like everybody else. We often give a bogus version of the Gospel, some fast-food religion, without any deep transformation of the self; and the result has been a the spiritual disaster of "Christian" countries that tend to be as consumer oriented, proud, warlike, racist, class conscious, and addictive as everybody else – and often more so, I'm afraid.***

We like our commitment to God to be easy, convenient, comfortable...on the side.

Second,

### **B. Develop the character of faithfulness in all areas of life.**

We live in a world of instant gratification and convenience. It's not only how we treat our faith and following Jesus but it's how we live our lives. Amazon Prime. Fast food. TV on demand. Text messaging. Internet. Youtube problem solvers. Etc. We like it and we like it NOW! Remember Comer's quote I just mentioned a few mins ago...

**“If it's no longer easy or fun or novel, when it's difficult or uncomfortable or boring...we just leave. We leave jobs, cities, churches, friendships, marriages.”**

(Comer 284)

**Faithfulness is long obedience in the same direction in an age of instant gratification.** (Comer 284).

The best things in life are usually the result of commitment and faithfulness...long obedience in the same direction. Sticking to it, through thick and thin.

Author Malcom Gladwell has written a book called **“Outliers.”** Where he discusses what it takes to become an expert in a given task in life. Athletes, composers, musicians, business. He describes a concept known as **“the 10,000 hour rule.”** To become the best of the best, requires 10,000 hours of dedicated and focused practice.

If you give one hour day to something. That's 350 hours in a year. It will take you approximately 30 years to get your 10,000 hours.

Time, daily obedience/commitment, perseverance, discipline. Hesed emet.

There's another book called "**Good to Great.**" Studying what separates the good/average companies from those that become GREAT. The study found

**"Greatness is not a function of circumstance. Greatness, it turns out, is largely a matter of conscious choice, and discipline."**

Time, daily obedience/commitment, perseverance, discipline. Hesed emet.

You've wanted to master playing the piano or guitar? Hesed emet.

You've wanted to master cooking? Hesed Emet.

Grades in school. Hesed emet.

You've wanted to master gentle language. Patience. Purity. Humility. You've want to Master in Following Jesus. Living a life like Jesus...you know what it takes?

Commitment, perseverance, discipline. Hesed emet.

I'll close with of one of my favorite stories in scripture is found in Matthew 15.

**<sup>22</sup> A Canaanite woman came to Jesus, crying out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon-possessed and suffering terribly."**

And we're told...

**<sup>23</sup> Jesus did not answer a word. So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."**

Jesus finally answers the woman and says.

**<sup>24</sup> "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."**

It seems kind of rude of Jesus, doesn't it? First, he doesn't answer and then when he does, it doesn't seem very welcoming.

John Ortberg suggests this incident is to be viewed as a test scenario.

Jesus is testing his disciples to see if they will stand up for the helpless Canaanite woman.

The disciples fail the test miserably. Send her away.

Jesus is also testing the hesed emet of the Canaanite woman. To see what her level of grit and toughness is, when the going gets tough. Listen to how she responds...

**25 The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said.**

Even through Jesus' silence and then comment about coming only for Israel. She comes back for more. Steadfast commitment and faithfulness in her.

Jesus wants to see just how tough and gritty she is. So he takes it one step further...

**26 He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."**

Children being Israel and dogs being everyone else, like Canaanite women. Surely this would cause her to walk away. But not this woman. She is tough as they come.

She replies. **"Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table."**

I bet you have a crumb for me Jesus and I'll take it. It's like she's saying to Jesus. "Is that the best you got?"

And at this Jesus turns to the woman...

**28 Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.**

She has grit and toughness and determination that is something Jesus admires.

I believe we too, we need to learn to have that same faithfulness.

Following Jesus...your faith journey...life in general requires long obedience in the same direction.

Your marriage...long obedience in the same direction.

With your kids...long obedience in the same direction.

With an employer or co-worker...long obedience in the same direction.

With your diet or language or some other temptation. Long obedience in the same direction.

An attitude of grumbling or complaining...

Your prayer life. It doesn't seem to be clicking. Or you've been praying for someone for months and God doesn't seem to be answering...Long obedience in the same direction.

Maybe you're walking through a period of doubt with your faith and you begin wondering about the reality of God. You'll need that long obedience in the same direction.

Maybe when it's when a pandemic hits and the going starts getting tough, school changes, work changes, travel plans change...you need some long obedience in the same direction.

**Where has God called you to be faithful?**