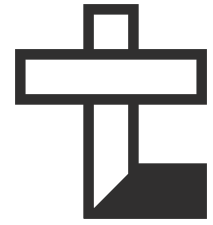


WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY ONE

"What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us."

— A.W. Tozer

What comes to mind when you hear the name "God"?

Your thought of God may be indifference, intimidation, or just irrelevance.

Let's be honest, you probably have a picture of God in your head. When you think of God, what do you think of. Write down a few adjectives or ideas you think of: (They can be good or bad. Just be honest.)

God is simultaneously revered and routine.

God is the name you thank when you win an award. It's the word you say when you get angry. It's the obligatory entity printed on the dollar bill.

Because of the overlapping layers in which our culture displays God, He can become confusing, convoluted, and complex.

But, God wants us to understand him; to know him. Not just to know *about* Him, but to actually *know him*.

The first formal introduction God gives to a man comes in His conversation with Moses. You may have heard the story of the burning bush. Moses is a shepherd in a desert. Not the most exciting job. Not the most exciting location.

Suddenly, Moses spots a bush burning in the middle of the desert but the bush doesn't burn down, it just keeps burning and since Moses doesn't have a super exciting life, this bush is really interesting. He goes over to it and the voice of God speaks through the bush. (I'm assuming it sounded a lot like Morgan Freeman.)

The voice tells Moses, the desert-dwelling shepherd, that he has been chosen to go liberate the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. As you may know, Egypt was way ahead of it's time. Egypt was a real civilization and the only one of it's kind. Egypt made the pyramids, they had jewelry, paper, written language, a calendar, they knew how to shave their faces. They'd even made the first breath mints. When you've got breath mints, you know you've arrived.

And here's Moses, a shaggy, dusty, shepherd being asked to confront the greatest nation the world had seen.

(If you're a Star Wars fan, this is literally where Luke Skywalker begins as a "nerf-herder" in the desert before he learns of his destiny to overthrow a much more polished and powerful empire.)

In fact, 40 years before, Moses had lashed out and killed a dude in Egypt. He's really not physically equipped nor emotionally prepared to face Egypt.

So, Moses wants some reassurance.

Who are you?

Who is sending me?

Who is asking me to go on this mission?

Don't act like you've never wondered the same thing.

Who is God?

If He's real, who is He?

If He cares, why does He?

If He's wanting something from me, would He just tell me outright and sign His name to it?

And Moses asks Him, "Who's on the other end of this bush-fire?"

Exodus 3:14

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Well, that cleared it up, didn't it?

I know. It feels a little vague.

But, this is an important statement by God. First, God is telling us that He does, in fact, exist. He *is*. He's here. He's real. Not only does he exist, He wants us to know that He exists.

In our culture, Agnosticism is a growing worldview. If you're unfamiliar with Agnosticism, it spawned early in Greek philosophers - including Socrates - who were skeptics. Agnosticism is the belief that the existence of God is unknown or unknowable. Many who hold this view would say God (or a god) likely exists, but we cannot know Him and He doesn't really want to know us.

As of 2010, nearly 10% of the world's population are agnostics. 14% of Americans would identify as agnostic. Maybe that's where you identify. Maybe you've considered yourself agnostic, and that's fine.

But, the way I read this exchange between Moses and God, it appears that God makes sure that He is seen, heard, and known.

Secondly, we learn that He is unchanging, unwavering, unfailing. God doesn't change. "I AM" means that he has been and always will be.

I don't know about you, but that's a huge relief for me. The world we live in is changing, evolving, creating, and reacting. While the world is constantly changing, the Creator is constant..

Thirdly, "I AM" shows us that God *is* all on His own. He has no beginning and no end. He doesn't need us to make Him exist. Rather we need Him to make us exist. I AM shows that He was there at the beginning - before the earth, before time, before us.

Often, we think that God is a construct of the human mind. Many great atheists write and speak about how God is a crutch for the weak-minded.

But, in this passage God turns the tables. He is saying He's not just a figment of the human imagination. In fact, He created the human mind. It didn't dream Him up, He dreamt it up. We didn't create Him for us. He created us for Him.

He exists whether we acknowledge Him or not. He is here whether we think He is or not. He is active whether we see it or not. He IS and He always HAS BEEN and He always WILL BE.

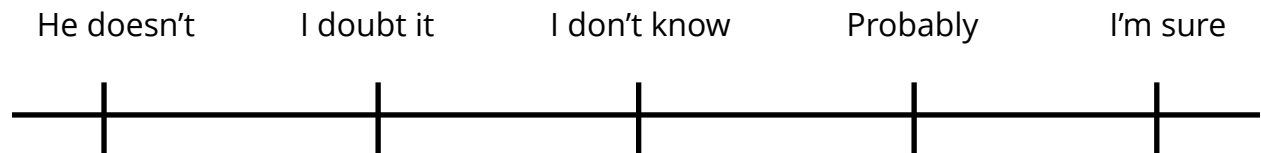
And that's just part one of this verse.
We'll look at part two tomorrow.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

Just answer the questions below... Here's the hardest part. Please be 100% honest. There's no judgment. This exercise is for you to think through your own faith, not to impress anyone else.

How convinced are you that God actually exists?



Why?

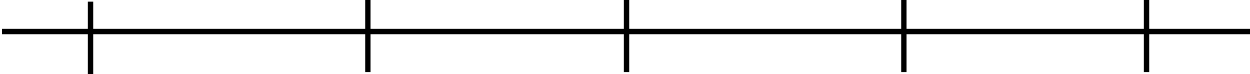
How convinced are you that God wants a relationship with mankind?



Why?

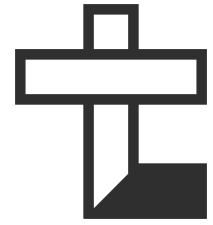
How convinced are you that God wants a relationship with *you*?

He doesn't I doubt it I don't know Probably I'm sure



Why?

WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY TWO

Let's move to part two of Moses' conversation with this burning bush. Yesterday, we left off with this statement:

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" [Exodus 3:14]

God doesn't leave this vague "I AM" statement alone. He goes on and *gives His name*:

Exodus 3:15

God also said to Moses, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'Yahweh' the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. [Exodus 3:15]

This is a big deal.

In Moses' day (and really throughout the Bible) gods are not a new concept. In fact, there are hundreds of other gods that will come and go throughout the Bible. Each culture would have gods of the sun, the moon, the rain, the earth, the crops, their fertility, etc.

But, these gods were unknowable and unresponsive.

Put yourself in the shoes of an ancient person in a day where you cannot control the most important things in your life. You need food. There are no grocery stores,

no supermarkets. You have to grow your food. What do you need to grow your food? Rain, sun, and soil. Unfortunately, for you rain, sun, and soil are things that are out of your control. So, who does control them? It must be a something greater than you. It's a god.

You'd want to do anything you could to make that god happy, so that god would send you the right amounts of rain, sun, and soil.

But, the trick to these gods is they are unknowable. You don't have a relationship, you just have a responsibility to please them so they'll bless you.

And these gods are unresponsive. You may try different tricks to make them notice you or take pity on you. But, there is no guarantee what you're doing will work.

But, here comes a God who is different from these other gods.

He doesn't just give you responsibility. He wants a relationship.

He doesn't just notice you, He responds to you.

We know He wants to know us because He takes an unprecedented step forward in giving humanity His name. He tells us His name is Yahweh.

Except, in Hebrew, God speaks without the use of vowels. I know that's weird, but this was a day where writing surfaces and utensils were at a premium, so conservation was the key.

So, God's name is actually pretty short here. It is Y-H-W-H. It's just these four letters. The fancy name for these four letters is the *tetragrammaton* which is a word that will win any game of Scrabble.

In English, we fill in vowels between the letters to make the word make sense, but honestly, we're not 100% what the vowels need to be. It could be YoHoWoHo which

would be really fun! But, a famous first century historian named Josephus gives us a hint we're on the right track with our current spelling.

But, the vowels that are inserted (YAHWEH) are pretty much just accent sounds to the existing consonants. They naturally would have made this sound.

Y (yah) H (hah) V (veh) H (hah)

In fact, there is an Rabbinic (that means it belongs to Jewish Rabbis) tradition that these sounds of Y (ya) H (ha) V (vey) H (ha) are what are called breathing sounds. They sound like your breath.

God breathing into man is a consistent thread throughout the Bible.

All the way at the very beginning of the Bible, God *breathes*:

Genesis 1:7

Then [*Yahweh*] God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Do you see the progression in this verse?

God forms the man of dust. There is a body. There are cells, tissues, organs, systems. But, there's not *life*.

I was talking with a doctor friend of mine. He said that in his first day of medical school, the professor stood in front of his class and asked, "How many of you would have a problem if I talk about God in this class?"

Many students raised their hands.

The professor then told his class, "You cannot separate God from the human body. If there was a dead body laying on this desk and I took a scalpel and cut it's leg, it

would bleed, right? (The answer is yes, the body would still bleed.) But, the body wouldn't clot nor heal itself."

"Now, let's say we took that same body and we hooked it up to breathing machines and heart machines. The lungs are pumping, the heart is beating. If I cut that leg, will the body heal itself? No!"

"Why? all the parts are there. The organs, the blood, the tissues, the heart, the breath. Everything. But, there's something we can't account for which makes us not just breathing, but *living*."

This is the thing that God places within us that takes us from simply a collective set of cells, organs, tissues, and systems. We're something more.

In Genesis, we see that God has made a body, but when He breathes into it, it changes us from a *body* to a *being*.

There's an ancient Hebrew idea that we are all living on borrowed breath. God breathed life into our lungs and with each breath we are saying His name (*ya*) (*ha*) (*vey*) (*ha*). Someday the breath God has placed within us will leave and that same breath will inhabit someone else's lungs.

But, while we are here,
 while we are living,
 while we are breathing,
 we are declaring the glory of God.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

Just answer the questions below... Here's the hardest part. Please be 100% honest. There's no judgment. This exercise is for you to think through your own faith, not to impress anyone.

STEP 1: STOP.

STEP 2: CLOSE YOUR EYES

STEP 3: TAKE A FEW DEEP BREATHS.

STEP 4: LISTEN TO YOUR BREATH.

Can hear it? Can you hear the sound of the YHVH?

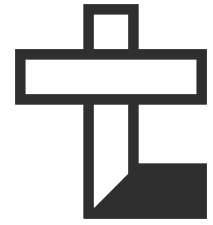
Repeat steps 1-4. Think about how incredible it is that you have breath. Your body is *living*. You are alive right now.

Did you hear the sound of YHVH in your breath?

Where do you think life came from?

What do you think life is for?

WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY THREE

A few years ago my wife and I were interviewing for a position at a church across the country. When we got there, the church set up meetings over coffee with many of the staff members we'd be working with. We drank a lot of coffee. I didn't sleep the whole week. But, there was one guy we met with and had a lovely conversation. He was warm, kind, and agreeable. We thought surely we'd be fast friends with his family.

A few months later, we moved to town and immediately asked to get together with him and his family. We got together, and we met his wife for the first time. I've got to be honest, I could not believe this was his wife. She seemed 100% different than him. She didn't dress, or act, or talk, or act, or converse like him at all. She was cold, stand-offish, and harsh.

Have you ever had this happen? Have you ever met someone, then met their spouse and thought, "I would have never matched these two up."

Today we're going to tackle one of the biggest questions in the history of Christianity. But, I need you to remember where we've been to understand where we're going. Remember the whole I AM conversation between Moses and YHVH? All of that stuff we've covered will resurface!

So, here we go.

I've heard this at least one. million. times.

How do you reconcile the God of the Old Testament with Jesus in the New Testament?

Maybe you've thought this before, but maybe you haven't.

Real quick, write down your thoughts, just gut reaction on each side.

What do you think of when hear the name *God*? Give me your top 5 adjectives. Be honest. Good, bad, ugly:

What do you think of when you hear the name *Jesus*? Give me your top 5 adjectives. Be honest. Good, bad, ugly:

Many times, in the Old Testament, we see a God who appears to be angry. He seems jealous and mad and petulant and cranky and demanding and authoritative. He makes commandments. He only likes those who like Him. He literally puts people to death for their actions.

Then in the New Testament, we see God's Son who appears to be kind. He seems to be loving and compassionate and gentle and charitable. He breaks commandments. He loves those who hate him. He literally brings people to life by his grace.

What happened? Did the two forget to compare notes? Is Jesus going off-script while on earth? Maybe God should have made a WWGD bracelet so Jesus would be reminded to ask *What Would God Do*.

We're not the first people to have these questions. Trying to match these two up is really difficult at times, but the centrality of the entire Bible is Jesus and according to Jesus, he and God are on the same page.

In John, chapter 8 Jesus is being asked a lot of questions about who he is. The Pharisees, who were the religious elite of the day, began a series of questions against Jesus' identity. Jesus had been claiming to be the Son of God, and they're just not buying it.

John 10:19 NIV

Then they asked him, "Where is your father?"

"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

Jesus is saying, if you know me, you know my Father. If you see me, you see Him. If you follow me, you understand Him. But, they're not satisfied, and they continue to badger him...

John 10:53

Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

Can't you just hear those words? *Who do you think you are?*

This is not a polite, quiet conversation. This is heated. If you're like most people and you don't love conflict, you're hoping the conversation is just over. But, if you're like Jesus and you've got a mission, you're not done yet.

John 10:54-59 *(with my commentary)*

Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, *whom you claim as your God* (*burn*), is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know him (*yikes*), I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you (*whoa*), but I do know him and obey his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

"You are not yet fifty years old," they said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!" *(good point.)*

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I AM!" *(that escalated quickly)*

At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Well, that went well.

But, did you notice what Jesus did there? He claims God status. He *is* as God *is*. He was there at the beginning. He is here now. He will be here after all of us are long gone. He IS. He's claiming to *be* God.

This was heretical. This was crazy. It's still crazy, isn't it? To think that God literally could be contained in flesh and blood and walk the earth with mankind.

And God seems cool with it! There are only two times in the New Testament when God speaks to a group of people at the same time. He speaks to individuals a lot, but only twice He speaks to multiple people at the same time. So, it would stand to reason that what He says must be important. Here's what he says *both* times:

"This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

(Matthew 3:17 & Matthew 17:5)

(We'll be come back to this verse tomorrow.)

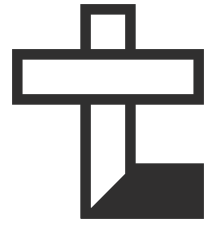
What God is saying, to multiple people and multiple times is that Jesus *is* His Son and that He *is* happy with him.

If you want to know God, you have to know Jesus. If you want to see God, you look at Jesus. If you want to understand God, you understand Jesus.

The two can be reconciled, because they've never been separate. They are connected and cannot be separated.

But, this is why we will focus on Jesus and The Way of Jesus throughout this experiment. He is the embodiment of God and **"God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross."** (Colossians 1:19-20)

WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY FOUR

So, if we now kind of have a hold on who God is, then who Jesus is, the question you may be wondering is “What does that have to do with me?” Turns out, pretty much everything. We understand who we are in light of who our creator is.

The very beginning of the Bible says:

Genesis 1:27 NIV

So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

That means we are created in His image. This matters! Because, that means if our Creator is loving, we are designed to love. If our Creator is just, we are designed to crave justice. So, knowing who God is shapes who who we are.

But, it goes deeper than simply having the traits of our creator.

When you’re a part of a family, you learn there’s something more than just characteristics that bind you. Whether good or bad, there’s an intrinsic part of us that feels knitted into family. We are stuck there, and inherently bonded into our family.

This is the way God sees us.

Remember this passage?

**“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”
(Matthew 3:17 & Matthew 17:5)**

The first time we see these words Jesus is being baptized.

Jesus chooses his cousin, John the Baptist (not a super creative nickname) to baptize him. He was called John the Baptist, not because he was a Baptist in the way we think of it. It wasn't about a denomination of a church.

It's nickname like Atilla the *hun*, Alexander the *great*, or Jabba the _____. Nice work.

By most scholars' opinions, this is probably the *most* defining moment in Jesus' life. More pivotal than walking on water, calming storms, even raising the dead. This moment is kind of the moment when Jesus becomes the Jesus we know. All four Gospels address Jesus' baptism in different ways.

In Luke's account, he does something very interesting and it's important us to understand. Here's what it says:

Luke 3:21-22 (NIV)

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

First of all, how good does this moment feel? Jesus doesn't have the easiest life on earth. A lot of people hated his guts. A lot of people needed him. A lot of activity drained him. He was constantly on call and on guard and on mission.

But, it's all worth it now!

Growing up, my family wasn't the most sentimental type. We still aren't exactly feelers. But, I remember the day I got married, my brother was my best man. After the ceremony he hugged me and simply whispered to me, "I'm proud of you." And it hit me like a Mack truck carrying a ton of bricks. I realized I couldn't remember the last time I'd heard those words.

Jesus has just heard
from his Father
in front of everyone
that God Himself is proud of him.
He loves his Son and is pleased with him.

That's gotta feel good. And for each of us, that's something we need to *hear*, but it's also something we need *believe*. That Yahweh, the God who created you *in His* own image is actually proud of you.

This is why God becomes known as a Father. When Jesus talks about God, many people would have seen Him as either a distant deity or a demanding dictator. Either He was unaccessible or He was unhappy.

We still see a lot of that today. Many of us would see God as uninvolved or unknowable.

But, Jesus tells people that God is a Father!

I know with my kids, there's a part of me that can't help but be proud of them. My daughter, Jane, recently took swim lessons. Really they were more like don't drown lessons.

For days, The kids would leave the pool wall and the instructor would hold them as they flailed attempting to swim. At the last lesson she was flailing as usual and for the first time the instructor let go of her.

I think I stopped breathing at that moment. It was literally sink or swim time.

Without missing a beat, Jane continued right on swimming.

When I caught my breath, my heart nearly exploded right there in my chest. I became one of those crazy parents yelling like a madman, telling Jane to "Go, go, go!" as I ran (which is not allowed!) along the side of the pool.

It's not like I can't swim. I learned how to swim when I was young. I'm actually pretty good at it. But, it's amazing when you are a Father how your pride in your kids becomes greater than your pride in anything else.

I could take all of the most impressive things I've ever done and stack them up. But, the pride I feel in my greatest achievements pales in comparison to the pride I feel in my kids' smallest achievements.

That's the kind of Father I think God is. He's so proud of His Son. But, that's not where it ends. The next section is riveting!

Luke 3:23-38 (NIV)

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim, the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David, 32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah, the son of Jacob,

the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham,
the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,
the son of Serug, the son of Reu,
the son of Peleg, the son of Eber,
the son of Shelah, the son of Cainan,
the son of Arphaxad [*I love that one*], the son of Shem,
the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,
the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch,
the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel,
the son of Kenan, the son of Enosh,
the son of Seth, the son of Adam,
the son of God.

Wasn't that exciting!

This is all of Jesus' lineage. All of his ancestors are listed here. And while there is a good reason for each of these people to be in Jesus' heritage, there's a finer point made.

Notice the first line:

Jesus was the Son, *so it was thought*, of Joseph. We know Jesus was not the son of Joseph. Jesus was born to Mary while she was still a virgin, so Joseph really was not his father. And from there, the genealogy of Jesus is all people we thought were his ancestors.

But, most of us would stop one line short of the payoff. If we were to write Jesus' (or anyone's lineage back to the beginning, we would likely stop at Adam. We know Adam is the first man created in the entire Bible.

But, Luke doesn't stop there. Because, Jesus isn't the son of Joseph. Jesus isn't the son of Adam. Jesus is the Son of God.

And the same is true of you.

Many of us are confined by our family history. We are defined by our heritage. Our parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, surnames confine or define us.

But John later writes, that we have a new family. A new Father.

1 John 3:1 (NIV)

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God! And that is what we are!

I don't know if your family has flaws. Mine does.

I don't know if your heritage is faultless. Mine isn't.

But, there's good news.

So it was thought, you are a son or a daughter your parents.

But, you are not. You are a son or a daughter of God.

So it was thought, you are a son or a daughter your family system.

But, you are not. You are a son or a daughter of God.

You are not the son of an addict.

You are a son of God.

You are not a daughter of an abuser.

You are a daughter of God.

You are not a child of divorce.

You are the daughter of God.

And God, the Father, is *proud* of His children.

Knowing who God is helps us know who we are. Seeing God as a proud Father, allows us to be loved children.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

We're going to do best and worst. Just write down a few words about the best things about your earthly family. Then, write down a few of the worst things about your family.

This is completely confidential.

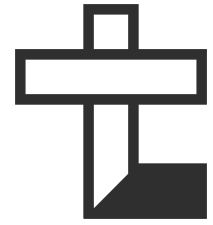
BEST

WORST

NEW

Now write down what the differences might be between your earthly family and this heavenly family. What's the difference between God the Father and your earthly father?

WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY FIVE

When I was in middle school, there was one surefire way to let a girl know how you felt about her: A mixtape.

How to make a mixtape:

1. Insert blank Memorex cassette tape into your radio/tape player combo boombox.
2. Call your local radio station and request Kissed By a Rose by Seal.
3. Realize the local DJ was already going to play that song without you asking for it because it was a top 40 hit.
4. Sit and listen to the radio waiting for Kissed By a Rose, with your finger on the record button.
5. Wade through the minutiae of No Doubt, Hootie and the Blowfish, and Matchbox 20 waiting for the greatest love song of all time to come over the airwaves.
6. Get bored of waiting, but sing along to 3 AM at the top of your lungs.
7. Hear the beginning of Kissed By a Rose, hit record a few seconds into the intro.
8. Realize, no one has any ideas what the song Kissed By a Rose is about.
9. Record a few other songs by Sugar Ray, Boys II Men, and throw in Achey Breaky Heart just to get the tape filled.
10. Write on the tape jacket all of the song names and artists, with your special lady's name on the fold.
11. Give tape to girl.
12. Become the coolest guy in school.

Go back to that moment:

Luke 3:21-22 (NIV)

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

What's interesting about this moment, is we learn something important about God's character and how He feels about us.

At this point, Jesus actually hasn't done anything. He hasn't performed miracles. He hasn't started preaching. He hasn't called any disciples. Jesus really hasn't accomplished much, yet.

But God still says how He feels about His Son, even without Jesus performing for it.

God begins Jesus' ministry by playing him a mixtape.

God prioritizes who you are above what you do.

Many of us feel we have to do the right thing to impress God,
then God will show us love,
then God will show us favor,
then God will show us grace.

Many of us picture God as an angry ruler who forces us to follow all the rules. He withholds love. He withholds favor. He withholds grace until we *earn* it through an impossible set of rules and checklists.

But, it turns out we can't *earn* it no matter how hard we try.

Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.

We can't earn his grace, nor His favor. We can only have faith in His grace and His goodness.

It's a gift.

God wants to remind you who you *are* before He reminds you of what you're supposed to *do*.

Through the rest of this experiment, I want you to remember *who you are*:

You are a child of God. He loves you, He has given you His favor and His grace.

The rest of this experiment, we will begin to dive into *what we do* as we explore the way of Jesus.

Too often in the church, we do this out of order. We begin by telling people what they are or aren't to *do*. Instead of beginning (as God does) with who they *are*.

We've lost the art of the mixtape.

We do this in our earthly relationships as well.

In parenting, we begin telling our kids what to *do*, instead of first reminding them who they *are*.

You are my child. You are special. I'm proud of you. And because of that, let's talk about what you should do...

In jobs, we begin telling our employees what to *do*, instead of first reminding them who they *are*.

You are valuable to this company. You have a lot of strength. That's why we hired you in the first place. And because of that, let's talk about what you should do...

In marriage, we begin telling our spouses what to *do*, instead of first reminding them who they *are*.

You are the love of my life. I trust you, and I care for you. That's why I married you. And because of that, let's talk about what you and I should do...

The entire reason we're experimenting in the Way of Jesus is that I believe that you and I are children of God. We are known and loved by Him (who we are) so deeply that He wants what is best for us (what we do).

He puts a mix tape throughout the Bible. He tells us that through Jesus, you and I *are*.

This is what the Bible's mixtape says about you:
have been given the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)
have been accepted by Jesus. (Romans 15:7)
have been made complete. (Colossians 2:10)
are no longer a slave to sin. (Romans 6:6)
are created in God's own image. (Genesis 1:27)
are chosen, royalty, God's special possession. (1 Peter 2:9)

So, now the question is, what do we *do* about it?

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

I want you to think about *who you are*. Put some thought into these questions:
This is completely confidential.

WHO YOU ARE

Write down some things about WHO YOU ARE. It can be all the things that make you *you*. Write down adjectives in any way you would describe yourself if you were being completely honest. FILL UP THESE BLANKS.

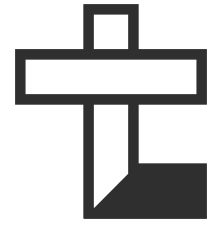
HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHO YOU ARE?

Seeing WHO YOU ARE, how do you feel about that? Is it what you want to be? Is it what you were hoping for or is it a let down? FILL UP THESE BLANKS.

HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT WHO GOD THINKS YOU ARE?

Seeing the words God writes about who you are, does He have a higher or lower view of who you are than you do?

WHO IS GOD?



or a hypothesis of whose we are

WEEK ONE // DAY SIX

So, now that we've established who we *are*, let's talk about what we *do*.

There are few times where Jesus is asked direct questions about what we should *do*. One of these instances, Jesus is teaching for a long time. He's being questioned about politics, relationships, economics, theology - all the fun stuff!

Then "an expert in the law" (or a religious expert) questioned Jesus,

Matthew 22:36 NIV

"What is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

A commandment is a command.

A command is an imperative.

It's a statement that tells us what to *do*.

This guy is asking Jesus, point blank, what is the most important thing I'm supposed to *do*?

Matthew 22:37 NIV

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

Now, there are 613 laws in the Torah (the first five books of the Bible). Out of 613 commandments to choose from, Jesus says this one is the most important.

It comes from Deuteronomy 6 and is known as the *Shema*. This was a prayer Jewish people, including Jesus, would pray in the morning and evening every single day.

But, this command isn't just a rule, this is a relationship.

God wants us to love Him. That's the most important thing we can do.

Jesus distinctively calls out four areas with which we're supposed to love God:

heart (our emotional, relational well-being)

soul (our God-given spiritual being)

mind (our intellect and intelligence)

strength (our physical being)

These areas are distinct, not different. They work collectively, but can be understood separately. When one breaks down, all of the others will suffer. Have you ever had a emotional issue that has taken a toll on you physically? How many times have you had a intellectual problem and it's hurt your relationships? It shows how intricately and intimately God made us. And He's worried about *all* of us. But, when all of these work together, they'll be exponentially stronger.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

Let's take an inventory of how you're loving God in these areas:

HEART

How is your emotional world? How are your relationships with your family members, your friends, your coworkers, etc?

SOUL

How is your soul? It's the part of you that is spiritually inclined. Do you feel connected to God?

MIND

How is your mind? Are you being challenged intellectually? Is what you're watching or reading or thinking about something good for you?

STRENGTH

How are you doing physically? How your body is functioning is important. How are you feeling physically? Are you at 100%?

But, it's not over yet!

This guy asked Jesus for one greatest commandment, but Jesus does him one better. Jesus gives him two greatest commandments.

Jesus adds in a verse from Leviticus 19 and says:

Matthew 22:39 NIV

“And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Jesus gives a bonus commandment!

There’s a reason Jesus includes this one. While we get caught up on the *love your neighbor* part, we often miss out on the *as yourself* part. There’s a transitive property to this commandment because *we will only be able to love others as much as we love ourselves*.

Love requires us to be vulnerable, open, and honest. But, we can’t truly be vulnerable, open, and honest with others until we love ourselves. You know people who can’t truly open themselves to their friends or family because they just don’t love who they are. They can’t be vulnerable with others because they don’t love who they are. They can’t be honest with loved ones because they don’t love themselves.

But, before we start combing bookstores looking for self-help books and watching more Dr. Phil, we have to realize that the transitive properties of these commandments is so deep and so powerful it stretches from beginning to end. It’s not just about learning to love ourselves. It’s about learning to love our God.

We learn to love others by loving ourselves.

We learn to love ourselves by loving God.

To know ourselves is to know our Creator.

To love ourselves is to love our Creator.

The Lab.

EXPERIMENT:

Let's take an inventory of how you're loving God in these areas:

GOD

How are you doing at loving God?

YOURSELF

How are you doing at loving yourself?

NEIGHBOR

How are you doing at loving your neighbor?
