

Encountering the Heart of God
Sermon 3: Slow to Anger
Bible Passages: Exodus 34:6-7; 2 Peter 3:1-10 (focus on v9)
(God has a Name – chapter 4)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is your reaction initially when you hear that God is 'slow to anger'? Does your reaction relate to any of the 'pictures of God' you discussed in week 1?
2. Watch the Bible Project short video on 'Slow to Anger' (https://youtu.be/TeQ1ng_YJD0) which gives a great overview of what it means that God is 'slow to anger'

Take time to reflect on the video together...

- What surprises you?
 - What helps you?
 - What do you find difficult?
3. Looking at the context of what was happening when this description of God was given to Moses, how do we see God being 'slow to anger' (see Exodus 32:1-8, 33:1-3, 34:8-11) to his people at that time?
 4. Another example can be found in Jonah. **Read Jonah 3:1-4:3 (focussing on 4:1-2)**. How does this story show God is 'slow to anger'? Why do you think Jonah was so cross? What other examples in the Bible can you give of God being patient and being 'slow to anger'?
 5. But does this mean that God never gets angry and that we don't need to worry about judgement, and that we can dismiss 'God's wrath' as simply an old fashioned and outdated idea?

What does God get angry about and why might this be a good thing?

Read 2 Peter 3:1-10 – what insights does this give you?

6. In the description of God in Exodus 34:6-7, 'anger' is in the middle surrounded by other words which God is not slow to give out... God is slow to anger, but quick to love; God is slow to anger, but quick to be compassionate....

Dwell on these two quotes...

'God is patient, the one who makes anger distant and brings compassion near.'

(John Mark Comer, God has a Name)

'...Things pour out of God more naturally than others... mercy is natural to God, Punishment is unnatural'... 'his anger requires provocation; his mercy is pent up, ready to gush forth... Yahweh needs no provoking to love'

(Dane Ortlund, Gentle & Lowly)

How do these quotes perhaps help us to see how we need to view God's anger?

APPLICATION

1. James 1:19 says 'My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.'

How do you feel about this? Do you struggle with anger at times? How might you pray for yourself in the light of this week's topic? See particularly Galatians 5:22.

2. Do you ever get cross with God that he never intervenes in situations in the world where we see such evil (think of the recent take over of Afghanistan by the Taliban or ISIS a few years ago in the Middle East)? Does the story of Jonah and the idea of God being 'slow to anger' give you any more understanding in why this may be?

RESPONSE

Pause and be still for a few minutes. In the silence ask God to reveal to you anything which he particularly wants you to take note of from this session.

Ask Him in the silence to help you understand who he is more deeply, and to transform your heart to be more like his heart.

DAILY RESPONSE

Each day this week:

1 Corinthians 3:18 says we are to 'be transformed into the likeness of Christ' – i.e. we are to seek for God to transform our heart to be like his.

This means we are to seek that we would be 'gracious and compassionate... slow to anger... abounding in love and faithfulness... forgiving...'

This week take the words of Exodus 34:6-7a and pray them slowly for yourself each day...

... Lord God give me your compassion today that I may be compassionate to others

... Lord God, give me your grace that I may show grace to others I find difficult today

... Lord God, help me to be patient like you, to be self-controlled and slow to anger....

And pray that God would transform your heart this week.