



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: **Lent Sermon Series – What is God Like? Loyal Love**  
Speaker: **Shauna Rushing – Pastor of Small Groups & Community**  
Scriptures: **Exodus 34:5-7, Luke 15:11-32**

### **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.”

### **Luke 15:11-32**

#### **The Parable of the Lost Son**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

<sup>13</sup> “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. <sup>14</sup> After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ <sup>20</sup> So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

<sup>21</sup> “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

<sup>22</sup> “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. <sup>27</sup> ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

<sup>28</sup> “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when

this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!

<sup>31</sup> “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

### **Sermon Summary:**

This Sunday, Pastor Shauna will be continuing our Lenten Series through Exodus 34. We will be learning about one of the most captivating Hebrew words in all of Scripture that God uses to describe himself in Exodus 34:6. Through it, we will explore the reach and richness of God's loyal love that seeks after the most lost and wounded parts of ourselves.

### **Sermon Questions:**

1. Do you identify more with the lies that the younger brother or the older brother believed in the parable of the Two Lost Sons and the Compassionate Father in Luke 15? If so, which ones and why?
2. What obstacles do you face that get in the way of being able to believe and trust that God is overflowing with loyal love?
3. What places or people in your life have you given up on God's love being able to reach? Take time to pray and ask God to help you recognize and receive his faithful love reaching out to the most desperate places of your heart and the people that you are deeply challenged to love.
4. Please refer to our Lenten Study Guide for further questions and reflection.



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CHURCHWIDE LENTEN 2024 BIBLE STUDY

what is  
**GOD**  
like?

WEEKLY STUDY GUIDE



## Session 5: Loyal Love | “ḤESED” | חֶסֶד

### IMMERSE

After reading the introduction for this session, look up some or all of the following Scriptures below and try and identify where the word *hesed* is used. Then, compare different translations to see how they interpreted the same word. An easy online tool to use and compare translations is [biblegateway.com](https://biblegateway.com).

Verses to look up: Deuteronomy 7:9, 12; Ruth 1:8, 2:20, 3:10; Job 10:12; Psalm 23:6, 136:1, Lamentations 3:32, Jonah 4:2, Micah 6:8

### INTRODUCTION

Arguably, there is no more captivating word in the Old Testament than the Hebrew word *hesed*. Packed into three Hebrew characters is a rich tapestry of meaning that is difficult to translate into other languages simply using one or two words. That is why it can be challenging to identify in our English translations because it may be communicated differently as faithful love, mercy, loving-kindness, favor, unfailing love, loyalty, or many others. However, once it is on your radar, you will begin to notice *hesed* popping up throughout the Old Testament, mostly to describe God, but it can also be attributed to humans like Ruth, Rahab, and David.

Although this is a Hebrew word, the theological impact and understanding are also found in the New Testament and the life of Jesus. Jesus, himself, quoted it directly in a couple of instances in the book of Matthew (Matt. 9:13, 12:7), taught it through many of his parables, and exemplified this

### INTRODUCTION (cont.)

primary characteristic of God throughout his life on earth. God’s faithful, extravagant, pursuing, never-giving-up, loving-kindness toward us is all wrapped up in the Hebrew word *hesed*. It is more than simply an adjective because it always includes action. Jesus didn’t just preach the loyal love of God, he demonstrated it by giving his own life on our behalf.



## Scripture Passage

### LUKE 15:11-32 (NET)

*Read together*

11 Then Jesus said, "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. 13 After a few days, the younger son gathered together all he had and left on a journey to a distant country, and there he squandered his wealth with a wild lifestyle. 14 Then after he had spent everything, a severe famine took place in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and worked for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. 16 He was longing to eat the carob pods<sup>[1]</sup> the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have food enough to spare, but here I am dying from hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired workers."' 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way from home his father saw him, and his heart went out to him; he ran and hugged his son and kissed him. 21 Then his son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Hurry! Bring the best robe, and put it on him! Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet! 23 Bring the fattened calf and kill it! Let us eat and celebrate, 24 because this son of mine was dead, and is alive again—he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field. As he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he called one of the slaves and asked what was happening. 27 The slave replied, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he got his son back safe and sound.' 28 But the older son became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and appealed to him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look! These many years I have worked like a slave for you, and I never disobeyed your commands. Yet you never gave me even a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends! 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and everything that belongs to me is yours. 32 It was appropriate to celebrate and be glad, for your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost and is found.'"





## Session 5: Loyal Love (cont.)

### OPENING QUESTION

What messages about love do you hear from social media, movies, and the surrounding culture? Name the soundbites, scripts, and visuals you often hear and see.

### INVESTIGATE

1. Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son together (feel free to take turns reading).
2. What do you notice about the Father's posture towards his two sons?
3. Compare and contrast the two sons' posture toward their father.
4. What do you think Jesus was trying to communicate about our heavenly Father?
5. How does this parable portray the concept of God's *hesed* love?

### INTEGRATE

1. Which of the 3 primary characters in the parable do you most identify with right now (the younger son, the older son, or the father) and why?
2. What do you believe God's posture is toward you?

### INVITE

1. Give 5 minutes for group members to individually process the prompt below. Playing soft instrumental music may be helpful.

Imagine that your Heavenly Father is walking toward you and you recognize that he sees and knows everything about you- your strengths and weaknesses, your mistakes and triumphs. What do you believe he thinks about you? What do you see in his eyes and hear in his voice as he comes towards you and begins to engage with you?

Be honest with yourself and God. Ask God to show you what he really thinks and feels about you. Tell him what you really think and feel about him. Ask God to show you any ways you have misunderstood who he is or what his posture is toward you.

Take time to journal your experience and impressions. Take turns sharing in a sentence or two, starting with the prompt

"I'm beginning to realize \_\_\_\_\_."

### CLOSING PRAYER

Ask for a volunteer from the group to close in prayer, asking God that each group member would have a deeper revelation of his *hesed* love this week.