

Same God, Different Seasons

2-11-26

2 - When God Is Near

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome those online!
- B. Slide1 DC: Healing happens in community. If you or someone you love is walking through **separation** or **divorce**, you don't have to do it alone. Our next Divorce Care group starts Feb 16 & meets every Mon at 6:30pm in the Agape Rm, 13 wks. More info/register, visit the Divorce Care pg on church website under the *Connect* tab.
- C. Slide2 GriefShare: We offer a GriefShare cycle twice per year, and we will be starting our Spring sessions on Sun, March 1st. It's a **video, workbook and discussion format** that features experts on grief and recovery topics as seen from a biblical perspective. More info/register, visit our webpage under the *Connect* tab, then click on *GriefShare*.
- D. Slide3 Ramadan: 30 days of prayer for the Rohingya, starts next Wed.
 - 1. **Ramadan**: a month of fasting (1 of the 5 pillars of Islam). **Eat after sunset & before dawn**. (no food, liquids, smoking, sexual relations). **Spiritual rewards for fasting. Sensitive to spiritual things.**
 - 2. *Negative perception* from Nepalese nationals, leading to resistance and social difficulties.
 - 3. Ramadan is one of **the most spiritually focused seasons** in the Muslim world. For 30 days, millions fast, pray, give generously, and seek closeness to God with unusual intentionality. **It is a time when hearts are softened, eternity is considered, and spiritual questions rise closer to the surface.** Ask that the Lord **to reveal Himself in truth, grace, and love.** God who draws near to seekers delights **to make Himself known.**
- E. Prayer: Canada school shooting. (8 dead, 25 injured, also the shooter took their life)

II. Slide4 Intro: When God Is Near (#1 When God is Distant)

- A. **Q:** Throughout the Bible, God **draws near** to His people, using various means/locations, (purpose) *to dwell with them*. Can you name some examples?
1. (Eden, Tabernacle, Temple, Incarnation, Church, New Jerusalem).
- B. **Last week** we talked about when God *feels distant*. **This week** we talk about when He *is near*. **But hear this - He has not moved!**
1. The same God who feels close **today**, will still be faithful when He feels quiet **tomorrow**.
- C. Big Idea: God's nearness is a gift - **but** it's also **a season** that requires *wisdom*.
1. **But hear this clearly:** **His nearness** is not proof that *He loves you more*. **And His distance** will never mean *He loves you less*. (pause)
- D. **Feeling God's nearness** is meant to **form us**, **not just comfort us!**
- E. **Balance:** **Don't Idolize** nearness, **nor Panic** in distance.
1. If you are in a **near season**, **don't** waste it.
 2. If you are in a **distant season**, **don't** misinterpret it.
 - a) Distance is not abandonment. It is often **apprenticeship**.
- F. **Slide5** Show Teaching Framework for Both Weeks: *READ from slide*.
1. **Both seasons require grace**. Both require **wisdom**. Both are **gifts**.

III. Slide6a **1 NAMING THE SEASON**

- A. Most of us can point to seasons where God felt incredibly **close**. **Prayer** was easy. **Worship** was alive. **Scripture** felt personal.
1. **Slide6b** **But** here's the question we **don't** ask enough: **What is God doing in us when He is near?**
- B. As Andrew reminded us last week, so many people know, use, and love **Phil.4:13**, *"I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*
1. **Slide6c** But what does the verse before it say? Phil. 4:12 *I know how to be **brought low**, and I know how to **abound**. In any and every circumstance,*

*I have **learned** the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.*

2. Paul **doesn't** just say he **experienced** seasons ... he **learned** in them.
3. Paul says: "I know how to be **brought low**, and I know how to **abound**."
 - a) He **doesn't** say: "*I feel the same in both.*"
4. He says: "I have learned." The learning happens across both.
 - a) **Nearness** is **not** accidental. **It's instructional.**

C. **Slide6d** We often ask Why is God **distant**? But rarely ask, Why is God **near** right now?

IV. **Slide7 2 THE PROMISE OF NEARNESS** (biblical theology)

- A. Build a biblical foundation that God **wants** to be near.
 1. Psalm 145:18 *The Lord is near to all who call on Him ...*
 2. James 4:8 *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.*
 3. Isaiah 57:15 *God dwells with the contrite and lowly.*
 4. Matthew 28:20 *I am with you always ...*
- B. God's nearness is **not** based on **our** performance but on **His** character.
- C. Tie back to Paul: In a Prison cell. Still in Contentment.
 1. **Nearness** wasn't *circumstantial* - it was **relational**.

V. **Slide8 3 WHAT GOD OFTEN DOES WHEN HE IS NEAR** (core teaching)

- A. When God feels **near**, He is **forming**:
 1. **Identity**: You are loved. You are secure. You belong.
 2. **Theology**: God is good. God is faithful. God is present.
 3. **Spiritual Habits**: Prayer. Scripture. Worship. Obedience.
 - a) Near seasons are **classroom seasons**.
- B. **Moses**: **Near** - Burning bush. **Distant** - 40 years in Midian.
- C. **David**: **Near** - Anointed king. **Distant** - Running from Saul

D. **Elijah**: **Near** - Fire from heaven. Distant - Cave depression

E. **Jesus**: **Near** - Baptism: “This is My beloved Son”. Distant - “My God, why have You forsaken Me?”

1. **Same God. Different season.**

F. So when we connect: *When God Is Near* with *When God Is Distant*, we see that these **aren't opposite Gods** - just **different seasons** with **the same Father**.

1. **Slide9** *God's **nearness** prepares us for His **felt distance**. And His **felt distance** reveals whether we learned anything in His **nearness**.

2. **Nearness** is **not permanent** - but it is **preparatory**.

a) **Eg.** David before the caves. **Jesus** before the wilderness. Paul before hardship.

3. **Picture God** is storing **truth in your soul** now, that you'll need **later**.

VI. **Slide10 4 THE DANGER OF THE NEAR SEASON** (warning w/o fear)

A. **Common pitfalls** when God feels near:

1. **Spiritual complacency** (“I’m good right now”).
2. **Emotional dependence** (when we’re chasing the feeling).
3. **Forgetting discipline** (Scripture, prayer, obedience).

B. **God's nearness** is meant to **deepen** our roots, **not replace** them.

VII. **Slide11 5 PRACTICING FAITH WHEN GOD IS NEAR** (handles, not guilt)

A. **Practices** for a season of nearness:

1. **Write down** what God is teaching you.
2. **Anchor truth** in Scripture, **not just experience**.
3. **Strengthen habits**, not just **emotions**.
4. **Thank Him** - don't cling to **the feeling**.
 - a) **Gratitude** keeps **nearness** from turning into **entitlement**.

b) Do we ever **thank Him** for His nearness? Or, **enjoy Him** in His nearness?

B. Slide12 The Big Connection

1. Nearness Builds Trust. Distance Tests Trust.
2. Nearness says: “Feel My love.” Distance says: “Trust My love.”
3. Nearness gives assurance. Distance produces endurance.
4. Nearness comforts. Distance deepens.
5. Nearness is often *experiential*. Distance is always *theological*.

VIII.7 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- A. Slide13 Can you think of 1 time when you felt God **especially near** in your life? - What do you think God was trying to *form in you* during that season?
- B. Slide14 Why do you think we struggle to steward “*good seasons*” well?
- C. Slide15 How can we **prepare spiritually** when God feels close?
- D. Take a moment **and Thank Him** if He is near, **or** to ask Him to be near.
- E. Prayer: Lord, **thank You** for drawing near. **Help** us not waste this season. Teach us what we **need now**, **so** we can **trust You later**.
- F. Keywords: near, distant, seasons.

Paul Tripp - “There’s never been a time when God *loves you more* on your best day, **nor** has there ever been a time when God was *less pleased with you* on your worse day.” **Because He loves!**