

*Exodus: Redemption: Their Story Is Our Story | Lent Edition*

Have you ever had someone break a promise? Maybe a friend, a parent, or even someone in the church. We all know the sting of broken trust. It leaves us hesitant, guarded, and even skeptical of others' intentions. Sometimes we carry that same hesitation into our relationship with God, wondering if he will come through or stay faithful when we fall short.

Today, we get to lean into the heart of a God who never fails, whose love and faithfulness are consistent and overflowing. In a moment of Israel's greatest failure, when they had just worshiped a golden calf, God chose to reveal something stunning about himself. In Exodus 34, he proclaims his name to Moses—not with anger or judgment, but with mercy and grace. And at the center of how he defines himself are these words: He abounds in love and faithfulness.

**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, 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." Exodus 34:6-7**

### **The Revelation of God's Character**

What happens in Exodus 34 is massive. After Israel completely blows it with the golden calf, after they've broken trust, broken the law, and broken God's heart, you'd expect him to be done with them. But instead of walking away, God leans in. He doesn't just forgive—he reveals himself more fully. This isn't just a moment of mercy; it's a moment of self-disclosure. God shows Moses—and us—who he is at his core. He passes in front of Moses and proclaims his name, not simply as a title, but as a description of his heart and character.

This is not just God introducing himself—this is God giving us a lens through which we're meant to understand him forever. This passage becomes one of the most repeated summaries of God in the Bible, echoed in the Psalms, the Prophets, and even in the New Testament. It tells us that God is not quick to anger, but patient; not distant, but full of compassion; and our next two words for this morning, not conditional in his love, but abounding in it; He is faithful and trustworthy, not fickle or double-minded.

*"But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness" (Psalm 86:15). "The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion" (Numbers 14:18).*

When I learned I would be preaching on these two words, I knew Kevin was being kind to me. These two words are better than all the generational sin stuff in the next few weeks! But as I started digging into this, I realized that this thread of abounding love and faithfulness is seen in the story of God throughout the whole Bible.

You might be thinking, "Sandy, that's a no-brainer," but as I started digging, I started studying the Hebrew for these two words, and my mind was blown. Now let me preface this: I'm no Hebrew scholar, and I know some of you are, but if you are going to learn two Hebrew words, these are the ones to remember. Let's start with the phrase abounding in love.

### **Abounding in Love**

The Hebrew word for Abounding in love is *hesed*. We don't have an English word that this translates into. It's the idea of steadfast, unfailing, and loyal love rooted in covenant. Hebrew Scholar Daniel Block says, "The Hebrew word *hesed* cannot be translated with one English word. This is a covenant term wrapping up all the positive attributes of God." *Hesed* is a covenant term. Hold that phrase in your mind for just a moment.

This *hesed*, this abounding love, is one of the most essential aspects of God's character. It's repeated over and over. We read it here in chapter 34—abounding in love and faithfulness, and then we see it appear in the following line, "maintaining love to thousands." The writer wants us to know that with the repetition of this phrase, he is trying to drive a point home. God speaks of his love back to back. Moses is trying to tell us that this is the truest thing about God, about Yahweh. Now, let's learn our second Hebrew word.

### **Abounding in Faithfulness**

In Hebrew, the term for abounding in faithfulness is *emet*, which in Hebrew means truth, but it carries a broader, richer meaning than our typical English sense of "factual accuracy." John Mark Comer states, "It's connected to the word Amen. Usually, people say 'amen' when a preacher says something that rings true." In Scripture, *emet* speaks to: truthfulness, faithfulness, reliability, integrity, and stability. Where else do we see God's *emet*?

*"For the Lord is good and his love [hesed] endures forever; his faithfulness [emet] continues through all generations" (Psalm 100:5).* God's *emet* isn't just for the past or a moment—it's generational. You can build your life on his trustworthiness.

*"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful [emet] God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4). God's emet means he is morally unshakable, just, and pure in his intentions. "For the word of the Lord is right and true [emet]; he is faithful in all he does" (Psalm 33:4). God's words are true, and his actions match his words. That's emet in motion.*

Where does *emet* appear in the New Testament? While *emet* is Hebrew, the New Testament equivalent is often translated from the Greek word "*aletheia*," which also means truth. Jesus fulfills and embodies this *emet*: "*The Word became flesh... full of grace [hesed] and truth [emet]*" (John 1:14). "*Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth [emet] and the life' (John 14:6a). "...whose rider [Christ] is called 'Faithful and True' (Revelation 19:11).*

Jesus doesn't just tell the truth—he is the truth. His life reveals God's unwavering character, promises kept, and faithfulness embodied. So when Scripture says God is full of *emet*, it means he is utterly dependable, always true to his word, and faithful in character, action, and promise. In the same breath that God describes himself as full of *hesed*, he adds that he abounds in *emet*. The pairing of these two words is powerful:

*Hesed* = steadfast love, covenant loyalty. *Emet* = unwavering truth, dependability. Together, they express God's love that is not sentimental or fickle but deeply rooted in truth and consistency. He loves because it is in his nature, and he will not change. John Mark Comer wrote,

**You can count on Yahweh; he won't let you down. I know we don't experience that a lot in our world. When life is hard, many of us bail. When it's not fun or easy, or it gets uncomfortable or boring, we leave. We leave jobs, cities, churches, friendships, and marriages. We just cut ties and move on. Half of us in this room were a generation raised on text messaging, making flakiness easier. We don't understand a long obedience in the same direction in an age of instant gratification. Comer**

Now, I went to school to be a PE and English teacher. And if there are any English peeps out there, you might remember a word called hendiadys (hen-DIE-uh-dis). A hendiadys is a literary device where two nouns are smashed together to help define one another, like the phrase "nice and warm," "grace and truth," or "*hesed* and *emet*." God's love is his faithfulness. God's faithfulness is his love.

John Mark Comer put it this way, "*Hesed* and *emet* are about God's loyalty—how he never, ever abandons his people, but he's faithful to the bitter end, no matter the cost." Yahweh's *hesed* and *emet*, his love and faithfulness, are among the major themes of the Bible. The word *hesed* is used 126 times in the Psalms. Now, let's put all of this together with the meaning behind a covenant.

## God's Covenant Commitment

So when we are talking about God abounding in love, we are talking about the term *hesed*, which is covenant language. God's love and faithfulness are not abstract ideas but covenantal realities. From the beginning, God has chosen to bind himself to his people through covenant. The language of *hesed* and *emet* is deeply connected to this covenant relationship. When God says he abounds in love and faithfulness, he is not just describing how he feels. He is declaring how he consistently and sacrificially acts in relationship with his people.

In Exodus 34, God reaffirms his covenant even after Israel breaks it. This shows us the depth of his commitment—not because of their faithfulness but because of his. Throughout Scripture, from Abraham to Jesus, we see God making and keeping promises. The ultimate fulfillment of this covenant of love and faithfulness is found in Christ, whose death and resurrection secure our eternal relationship with God.

In the ancient world, a covenant was more than just a contract, it was a sacred, binding agreement that established a relationship between two parties. Common between kings and their subjects or tribes and rulers, covenants outlined expectations, blessings for faithfulness, and consequences for breaking them. These covenants were often sealed with sacrifices, oaths, and rituals, making them relational and permanent.

God uses covenantal language not because he needs anything from us but to graciously bind himself to his people in love. Unlike human covenants, which could be broken or manipulated, God's covenants are anchored in his abounding love and faithfulness, his *hesed* and *emet*. The Bible's story has a lot to do with God making covenants. One of those covenants is in Genesis 12. God calls a desert Bedouin named Abram, and the first thing God does with Abram is make a covenant, a promise.

**The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; Genesis 12:1-4a**

Do you see all of the "I will" language? That is covenant language. God promises that Abram's family will become a great nation. First, God will bless Abram's family. Then, they will bless the world. Through this covenant, God will make right in the world what has gone astray. But make sure to note what this covenant says and doesn't say.

God does not promise Abraham an easy life with lots of money and a cabin in Tahoe. Abraham's life was anything but easy. As many of us do, Abraham had to wait on God's promises. When Abraham and Sarah are well into their senior years of life, with infertility issues, they wonder how this is going to happen.

Then, we get what we think is a bizarre story in Genesis 15. God tells Abraham to gather some animals—a cow, a goat, a ram, and a few birds—and make a sacrifice. So Abraham cuts them in half and lays the pieces out. It's not some weird ritual BBQ. It's actually something people in the ancient Near East called "cutting a covenant." The idea was that both parties would walk through the line of dead animals to say, "If I break this promise, let what happened to these animals happen to me." Basically, blood and death showing they were all in.

But then the story takes a wild turn. God puts Abraham into a deep sleep, where Abraham sees a vision. Abraham sees this intense image: a smoking firepot, representing Yahweh, moving through the blood and bodies—alone. Yahweh says, "I'm taking the whole weight of this promise on me. Even if you fail, I won't."

Yeah, it's wild. Don't feel weird if that part caught you off guard. It's a strange scene, but it's loaded with meaning. This is Yahweh saying, "Even if Abraham and his people blow it—and they will—I'm still keeping my word." God is committed to saving the world through this messy, broken family. No matter the cost. And if blood has to be spilled to make that happen, it won't be Abraham's. It'll be God's. He's saying, "I'll take the hit. I'll bleed. I'll die if that's what it takes to keep my promise and bring life back into the world."

Your mind's probably already jumping to Jesus and it should. But what's wild is this whole thing started thousands of years before the cross. The rescue plan was already in motion. Over and over in Scripture, we see God's *hesed* and *emet*, his abiding love and faithfulness. It starts with Abraham and Sarah.

Then, in Genesis 28–32, Jacob lies, cheats, and runs. But when he's alone in the wilderness, God appears to him in a dream, repeating the covenant he made with Abraham. After all his scheming, God still says, "I am with you...I will not leave you until I have done what I promised" (Genesis 28:15). *Hesed*: God pursues Jacob, not because he's good, but because God is good. *Emet*: God keeps the promise, even to a trickster.

From Exodus to Deuteronomy, Israel rebels hard with making a golden calf, complaining that slavery was better than trusting God, and then refuses to enter the land. Moses intercedes and quotes God back to himself (Exodus 34:6–7). God forgives, guides, feeds, and stays with his people. *Hesed*: God doesn't abandon them. *Emet*: He leads them for 40 years—cloud by day and fire by night.

King David comes on the scene in 2 Samuel and throughout the Psalms. God makes a covenant with David: "Your throne will be established forever." David sins big (adultery, murder), but when he repents, God's *hesed* covers him. David writes, "For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness [hesed and emet] continues through all generations" (Psalm 100:5). "All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful [hesed and emet]" (Psalm 25:10a).

David knows firsthand what it means to be held by a love he didn't deserve and a God who tells the truth, even when it hurts.

Then, we hear from the prophets. God tells Hosea to marry a woman who will betray him just like Israel betrayed God. Hosea keeps loving her, and God keeps loving Israel. "I will betroth you to me forever; [hesed and emet]..." (Hosea 2:19–20). This is covenant love that refuses to quit even when it's heartbreaking. Jeremiah learns a new covenant is coming. With Israel in exile, when everything seems lost, God says: "I have loved you with an everlasting *hesed*." "I will make a new covenant...I will write it on their hearts." Even when his people have burned everything down, God's *emet* says: "I'm not done."

Now, we move to the New Testament, and Jesus comes on the scene. John writes about Jesus in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace [hesed] and truth [emet]. Jesus lives out *hesed*—touching lepers, forgiving sinners, feeding the hungry. He speaks *emet*—calling out injustice, hypocrisy, and lies. On the cross, he fulfills the covenant himself. God takes the curse, just like Genesis 15 foreshadowed. "This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many..." (Matthew 26:28).

It doesn't end there; we continue to see God's *hesed* and *emet* through his disciples. Peter denies Jesus three times, but the resurrected Jesus meets him with breakfast and a question: "Do you love me?" Jesus reinstates him, not with shame, but with purpose. Even after betrayal, *hesed* and *emet* hold.

God makes a promise. God sticks with it. God keeps it in blood, in grace, and in flesh. God's unfailing love and faithfulness assure his steadfast commitment to us. From Abraham to the prophets to Jesus, God's *hesed* and *emet* never let go. "Though we are faithless, He remains faithful" (2 Timothy 2:13).

## How can we respond to God's love and faithfulness

### Receive It Personally

God's abounding love and faithfulness aren't just abstract ideas, they're meant to be experienced. To receive them personally means we stop trying to earn his approval and start believing that we are already fully loved and held by him. You are his beloved. It means we stop living like God is waiting to be disappointed in us and start trusting that he's already shown us his heart. He's for us. Through Jesus, we're welcomed into God's family and that identity is secure.

**Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. John 1:12–13**

So let his love shape how you see yourself, calm the noise of fear or shame, and give you confidence in every season. God's

covenant love assures us that his relationship with us depends not on our performance but on his promise. We can live in freedom and confidence, knowing that his commitment to us is sealed by his character and fulfilled in Christ.

No matter what you have done, God's love, his *hesed* remains. There is nothing you can do that would make God love you more or less. I know that I have wasted so many years striving to earn God's love and approval. As the product of a Christian school that was shame-based, it was ingrained in me that I had to live perfectly or "straight to hell, no stops." So, any brokenness was never allowed to be seen. That meant either I stuffed emotions, behaved in ways in the shadows, or tried to be perfect. All unhealthy ways of living.

In his book *Life of the Beloved*, Henri Nouwen says, "The first step to healing is not to step away from the pain, but to step toward it." Let's be honest. Suffering is hard. When life falls apart, it's easy to feel like we've messed up or missed out. But here's the profound truth: our pain doesn't have to be a roadblock to receiving God's abounding love and faithfulness. It can become the very path to it. One of the mysteries of following Jesus is that everything we walk through—joy, grief, wholeness, or brokenness—can become part of God's work in shaping who we are becoming.

Suffering has a way of stripping away what's shallow and surfacing what's real. It exposes the false loves we've clung to—those things we thought would give us identity, security, or worth—and cuts away our attachments to anything less than God. It brings us to the end of ourselves and that's often where we finally find him. In the silence, in the questions, in the ache, he is forming depth, resilience, and trust that can't be learned any other way. What feels like breaking may actually be the beginning of becoming.

We love to say that all the good things, beauty, love, celebration, point us to God's glory. But it's harder to believe that the hard stuff, loss, disappointment, suffering, can lead us there, too. Yet Jesus said, "Didn't you know we must suffer to enter into glory?"

Caring for one another means being willing to walk through that brokenness together, not to fix it, but to help each other see that our wounds don't disqualify us from God's abounding love and faithfulness. We begin to see it differently when we place our pain under God's blessing instead of a curse. Too often, we interpret our suffering as confirmation of our worst fears: "I knew I was worthless. This just proves it." But that's not the voice of God; that is shame speaking.

God invites us to pull our brokenness out from under the shadow of the curse and place it in the light of his love and faithfulness. You are not cursed. You are not forgotten. You are his beloved. We cling to that truth, even when life tells us otherwise. "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for*

*it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole'" (Galatians 3:13).*

### Reflect It in Our Lives

God's love isn't meant to stop with us but to move through us. When we experience his abounding love and faithfulness, we naturally reflect that love in how we treat others. Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us, with a love that is patient, sacrificial, and faithful. "*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*" (John 13:34–35).

That means forgiving when it's hard, being present with people in their pain, and choosing grace over judgment. It means embodying God's character in our relationships, even when it costs us. This is how the world sees Christ in us, not by how much we know, but by how deeply we love. I've been preaching this point to myself.

After Kevin's sermon last week, I was thoroughly convicted of not being slow to anger and then, studying this section, not reflecting God's abounding love and faithfulness. There was a situation with a team this week that just blew up through a bunch of miscommunication. As the communications pastor, I loathe when that happens. I was furious. You could say I was not long of nostrils last week, and honestly, the last thing I wanted to do was reflect abounding love and faithfulness to this particular group. As I said in my previous point, I'm pretty good at hiding it, but I was a mess internally. I wanted justice; I wanted people to keep their word and do what they said they would do.

Then I was reminded of the benediction I gave at the end of last week's service:

**May you go with the God who is long of nostrils, slow to anger and rich in compassion, refusing to respond with indifference but always with love. And may you reflect that divine patience—choosing understanding over fury, mercy overreaction, and presence over apathy.**

You have to love it when God uses his Word and your own words to deeply examine what you are reflecting. Are you reflecting your flesh, or are you reflecting God's abounding love and faithfulness?

### Rely on It in Difficult Times

Life will test us. Storms will come. Questions will arise. But God's love and faithfulness remain constant. When we face uncertainty, we don't have to panic; we remember who he is. Relying on God's faithfulness means believing his promises are true even when our circumstances don't make sense. It means leaning on his strength when ours runs out, holding on to hope when we feel overwhelmed, and trusting that he is working even when



we can't see it. Isaiah 41:10 reminds us not to fear because God is with us, upholding us with his righteous hand.

Recently, one of my friends has leaned into this verse in Isaiah. She has been going through it. It's been one hard thing after another, but I've been encouraged by her faith in God's promises even when this atmospheric river of storms she is facing keeps coming. Throughout what she is facing, God keeps showing up, sometimes at the last moment, sometimes in the early storm warnings. His abiding love and faithfulness continue to encourage and protect her through the storms.

What situation in your life feels uncertain or overwhelming? Are there promises from God you've stopped believing because of disappointment or delay? How can you practically lean into God's strength this week instead of your own?

God's unfailing love and faithfulness assure us of his steadfast commitment to us. Exodus 34:6-7 reveals that God's love and faithfulness are not just attributes but the essence of his being. Because he abounds in love and faithfulness, we can walk in security, trust, and obedience, knowing he will never fail us.

*This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.*

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