

## Grateful

*The Trifecta – Good, Merciful, and Faithful*

*“For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.” – Psalm 100:5*

She loves me. She loves me not. She loves me! Many of you likely remember playing a game when you were a child where you would pick a flower and then, one by one, pull off the petals. Each petal pull, you would repeat this phrase in a sort of eeny, meeny, miny, moe game to determine if a certain girl or boy liked you or not. What better way to determine future love than to leave it up to chance, I can't believe that didn't predict my future relationships!

In many ways, I play that same game with God to determine if He is still looking down kindly on me, not turning away from me in disgust. I know that I think I'm good, but does God think this? He does not keep a naughty and nice list. I believe this is why some people feel that initially becoming a Christian is too easy. It must be harder than it is, right? It would make more sense if I had to constantly earn it to keep it. This is why so many religions are works-based. From making a pilgrimage to Mecca, to doing rituals, to giving away everything you own, the gift offered to us seems almost too good (and easy) to be true.

Psalm 100 is one of my favorite chapters in the Bible. I remember memorizing it in Kindergarten to recite to my parents. Granted, I likely did not understand the full extent of what it means, but what I did know is that I earned the fifth star on my Pizza Hut book-it bag for reciting it, earning myself a free personal pan pizza. Looking back at the context of the chapter, specifically verse 5, I see so much God-packed goodness squeezed into just a few words.

Wisdom bursts forth from this chapter. In verse 5, the author offers us three reasons to praise God. First, He is good. No matter what I think of Him, how many lows each day brings, or what others think and say, He is absolutely good. His ways are good. His thoughts are good. Even God's discipline is good and for our good. Second, His love is steadfast and without equal. Just as the prodigal son was welcomed with open arms after wasting his complete inheritance and disappointing his family, his father's love was steadfast and unbreakable. Third, God's faithfulness continues for all future generations. Throughout Scripture, from Genesis and the Abrahamic Covenant to Revelation and the fulfillment of all prophecy, his faithfulness is evident through it all. The story He started, He will finish. Forever and always, God is and will be:

- 1) Good
- 2) Merciful
- 3) Faithful

What else do we truly need? Of course, we need food, shelter, clothing, friends, love, and so much more. But when all else fails me, I can boil down life to my dependence on Him for what He has promised me. If God being good, merciful, and faithful depends on me, I'm in trouble. Consider this thought: God is not in love with a future version of you.

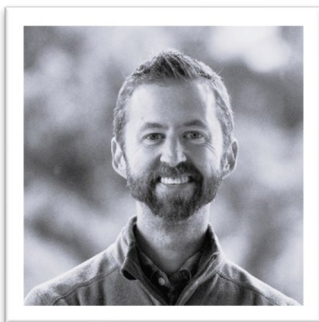
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I need a relationship with my Father, but I also need a relationship with those He has put in community around me. Even so, one of the most difficult challenges I have with relationships is the ability to depend on people. It is one thing to be friendly with someone, but it is something else entirely to share your burdens, fears, and regrets and then trust they will both do the same with you and will not betray your confidence. Being vulnerable is an essential part of community. We have all visited (or attended) a church where people shake hands during the greeting time and then stampede to the exit as soon as the service is over. Although the preaching and worship music might be good, we have missed what I believe is the most overlooked and underappreciated value of the Christian life: finding a body of believers to live life with. Although they are not perfectly good, merciful, and faithful, my Christian community should point me to the One who is.

My church has an official slogan, “Unimpressive but authentic.” That describes us perfectly. It was awkward at first, but choosing to let others invest in me and I in them proved to be what we were missing as a family. Letting ourselves share with our family group the deep, dark struggles that we don’t tell anyone, listening to them talk about depression, anxiety, doubt in their faith, and so much more, made me appreciate and look forward to growing with them. Through His people, God continues to show me that He is good, merciful, and faithful. I had often forgotten these things about Him until I saw them in His people. Since the stars display His handiwork, what other response to His love and care for me could I have except to fall down and worship? He is good, merciful, and always faithful.

- 1) What in your life do you struggle with where God does not seem good, merciful, or faithful?**
- 2) Who around you needs encouragement for you to share these characteristics of God?**
- 3) Do you have a Gospel-centered, community-focused church to daily share life with? Do you have other relationships, like your CVF group, where you can be unimpressive and authentic as well?”**



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