

PURSUED: (Week Two)

June 9th, 2024

“The Unwavering Commitment of God”

REVIEW:

- As parents, we observe our children’s instinct to run and explore, often leading to the necessity of childproofing our homes. Children often have an instinct to run from their parents, and as God’s children, we too have a tendency to run from God.

REASONS WE RUN FROM GOD:

- Fear, Guilt, and Punishment.
 - The story of Adam and Eve in the garden exemplifies how we instinctively hide from God when we feel guilty or afraid.
 - This fear is often rooted in our understanding of authority from our childhood experiences.
- Seeking Approval and Right Standing.
 - We often believe there is a spiritual equation that we need to fulfill to earn God’s approval.
 - Despite knowing that God loves us, we continue to seek His approval, leading to exhaustion from trying to earn His favor.
- Hurt and Pain.
 - Many of us run from God due to past hurts and injustices. This pain often turns into anger, causing us to distance ourselves from God and question His existence.
 - We struggle to reconcile our understanding of a loving God with the suffering we see.
- The Pressure to Present a Facade.
 - Some of us run from God by presenting a facade of constant happiness and well-being to others. We feel the need to hide our struggles and present a false image of ourselves, fearing disappointment or judgment from others. The pressure to maintain this facade is exhausting and leaves us spiritually tired.

THE STORY OF HOSEA: The book of Hosea deep dives us into the profound love and pursuit of God for His people and the symbolism of the bride and the Lamb in Revelation.

A SYMBOL OF GOD’S DEVOTION:

- From the beginning of the Bible to the end, the primary message is not about our pursuit of God but about His pursuit of us.
- Hosea, a prophet in the northern Kingdom of Israel during a time of prosperity, is instructed by God to marry a prostitute named Gomer. This unconventional command symbolizes Israel's unfaithfulness to God, likened to a marital relationship turned sour.
- Through this story, God reveals His unwavering love and commitment to His people, even when they are unfaithful.
- God demonstrates His boundless love and relentless pursuit of us despite our constant shortcomings and failures, unlike human relationships where we may give up when hurt repeatedly.
- God's pursuit of us is rooted in His desire for an eternal relationship with His people, marked by love, grace, and faithfulness.

A SYMBOL OF MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE:

- The metaphor of marriage between God and His people is first introduced in the book of Hosea.
- This metaphor signifies a covenantal relationship where God never breaks His end of the covenant, emphasizing His faithfulness and love toward His people.

- The concept of Christ as the bridegroom and the church as His bride further illustrates the depth of God's love and commitment to His people.
- **Revelation 19:7** highlights the celebration in heaven, with the Lamb symbolizing Jesus and the bride symbolizing the community of believers.

GOD'S EXTREME MEASURES FOR RELATIONSHIP:

- God's pursuit of us extends through the sacrificial life and death of Jesus, offering eternal life and a lasting relationship with Him.
- Despite our constant failings and sin, God continues to pursue us with unfailing love and grace, longing for a deep connection with His people.
- Just as Hosea pursued his unfaithful wife, Gomer, God persistently seeks us out even when we stray, inviting us to come to an end of our running and embrace His love and forgiveness.

CONCLUSION:

- As we reflect on our tendency to run from God, let us remember that God is not a distant figure waiting to punish us, but a loving Father who seeks to bring us rest and peace.
- Let us seek rest in God's presence, knowing that it is okay to be vulnerable and honest about our struggles, and to find peace in His unconditional love.
- As we reflect on God's relentless love and grace, may we be reminded of our need to stop running and accept His invitation to a life-transforming relationship.
- Let us respond to God's pursuit with humility, repentance, and a renewed commitment to walk closely with Him, knowing that His love knows no bounds and His desire for intimacy with us is eternal.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS TO REFLECT AND DISCUSS:

1. Reflecting on the analogy of children running from their parents, why do you think we tend to run from God in our spiritual lives? Have you experienced moments of running from God in your own journey? Share with the group.
2. Brad mentioned various reasons why people may run from God, such as fear of punishment, seeking approval, past hurts, or presenting a facade to others. Which of these reasons resonates with you personally? How have these factors influenced your relationship with God?
3. How does the concept of God's pursuit of us, rather than our pursuit of Him, challenge your understanding of God's love and grace? In what ways have you experienced or witnessed God's relentless pursuit in your life or the lives of others?
4. Consider the statement, "*It's OK to not be OK, but it's not OK to stay that way.*" How can we encourage one another to seek help, healing, and restoration in our relationship with God when we are feeling spiritually tired or worn out? How can we create a safe space within our small group or community to share our true selves and support one another in our spiritual journeys?
5. As we continue in the series "*Pursued*," how can we actively respond to God's pursuit of us in our daily lives? What practical steps can we take to deepen our relationship with God and experience His love and grace more fully?
6. Reflect on the idea that God shockingly pursues us like a devoted husband pursuing his wayward wife. How does God's unwavering love and pursuit challenge your perspective on forgiveness and reconciliation?