



## Exodus (Part 27) – The God of Mercy and Glory

Matt Chandler – April 23, 2017

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[Video]

From darkness to light, this is the story we all share as the people of God. He draws us out to draw us in. From the birth of Israel to the church today, God delivers and dwells with his people. This story began several thousand years ago, and it began with a promise from God to Abraham that he would make his offspring more numerous than the stars in the sky, a great nation that would one day dwell in the Promised Land.

More than 400 years passed, and Abraham's descendants had not seen this promise fulfilled. Instead, the Israelites lived as foreigners in the land of Egypt. Fearing that the Hebrews would grow into a mighty nation and overtake them, the Pharaoh of Egypt forced them to work as slaves, but Israel continued to grow. In response, the Egyptians increased their oppression of God's people, and Pharaoh gave a terrible decree. Every son born to the Hebrews would be thrown into the river.

But a Levite couple defied this order, trusting God's will for their son's life, and God did have a plan for this child. Pharaoh's daughter found the baby and took pity on him. She named him Moses because he was drawn out of the water. As Moses grew older and saw the suffering of his people, anger burned within him. When he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, Moses killed the man and fled Egypt to hide in the desert.

Years passed, and Moses made a new life for himself in Midian. Then one day the voice of the Lord called out to him from a burning bush. God told Moses that he saw the persecution of his people in Egypt and he heard their cries. He promised to deliver the Israelites from slavery, and he commanded Moses to go before Pharaoh on their behalf. Moses was terrified, so God sent Moses' brother Aaron to go with him.

The brothers went before Pharaoh, performing signs and wonders, but Pharaoh would not listen, so God brought down plagues upon Egypt, yet Pharaoh's heart remained as hard as stone. To prepare for the tenth and final plague, the Hebrews marked their doors with the blood of spotless lambs. That night, the angel of death passed through the kingdom, killing the firstborn child of every Egyptian household that did not bear the mark, including Pharaoh's.

Heartbroken, Pharaoh told the Israelites to go. They were finally set free, and the Spirit of God led the people out and toward the Promised Land, but Pharaoh's grief soon turned to rage. He changed his mind and then commanded the Egyptian army to pursue them. When the Israelites came to the Red Sea, Moses lifted his staff to the sky and the waters parted. The Hebrews passed through the towering waves, and the Egyptians were swallowed by the sea.

The Israelites found themselves in a harsh wilderness. Though they had just witnessed God's power and might in rescuing them, the people doubted their Deliverer would provide and, instead, complained of hunger and thirst. A few days later, they found manna on the ground, sweet and good to eat, and the Lord told Moses to strike a rock with his staff, giving them water to drink. The Lord had provided yet again.

As the Israelites approached Mount Sinai, Moses delivered a word from God. If they obeyed and kept God's covenant, God would make them his treasured possession, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and the people promised to do so. Three days later, the mountain shook as a sound like a trumpet grew louder and louder. Then the Lord came down in fire and smoke. When the people heard God's voice, they grew afraid and asked Moses to speak with God on their behalf.

God gave Moses many laws and instructions, including the Ten Commandments, and the Hebrews promised to worship the Lord alone and to keep his laws. Moses spent 40 days and nights on the mountain with God and returned to find the people bowing down to an idol. They had forgotten their promise. Moses burned the idols and atoned for the people's sin, and though God punished the Israelites, he did not destroy them completely.

After the Israelites repented of their unfaithfulness, they went to work making everything the Lord had instructed. They sewed fine garments for Aaron and his sons and consecrated them with oil for their service as priests. They built the ark of the covenant to hold the tablets of the Law and also built the tabernacle where God would dwell with his people...Yahweh, the one who drew them out of slavery.

Though the Israelites would endure more strife and hardship, they continued on in hope toward the Promised Land. The story of Israel is the story of us today. We are God's people. He draws us out to draw us in, and, like the Israelites, we still await the Promised Land in the midst of our sin and suffering, yet God is with us.

[End of video]

Good morning. It's good to see you. First through fifth graders, I personally love that you're in here with us. You bring an energy and a flexibility that I personally love. I'm excited for the picnic afterwards. When I woke up this morning it was 46 out. I thought, "This is a great day to get in a dunk tank and get dunked." I checked the weather, and sure enough, at my scheduled slot it's going to be 67 and breezy. I'm guessing we're getting that water out of a hose, which means I'll bring a sweater to the family picnic. So I'm excited to be with you guys this afternoon.

First through fifth graders, I know that for the last several months you have been learning about the way Jesus lived and how you might walk as Jesus walked. While you've been learning that, your parents or whomever you come to church with have been in here with me, and we've been talking about the presence and power of God in our lives out of the book of Exodus. We're just going to dive right into that book yet again today with you with us.

I have two things I want to do, and I know you can do this. You hang in there with me. Two things. That's all we're covering. Your parents could let you know that I could take those two things and make it an hour and a half, but we're not doing that today. Here are the two things, and you're going to say them back to me. The first is *God is glorious*. Then the second thing is *God is merciful*. That's the agenda for today: God is glorious. God is merciful.

Let me catch you up where we are in the story. God has gifted to his people, via no act of their own, his presence and his power. God's people, just like us, have turned their backs on that and have pursued life according to their own rules and their own ways, and this has made God angry. In fact, the term the Bible is going to use is *wrath*, that God is full of wrath toward our sin. God hates sin. It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter how little or big the sin. God hates it. All of it is rebellion against what he has for his children, which is his presence and his power.

Moses, in our story, has gone back up on that little scary mountain we just saw to try to atone for the sin, to try to make it right between God and his people, and that's where we pick up the story in Exodus 33. If you have a Bible, grab that. If you don't, there should be a hardback black one somewhere around you. Kids, there's a page number on here. If you're not quite sure how the Bible works, the big number is the chapter and the little number is the verse. We're in big number 33, small number 1, and we'll dive into these six verses.

**"The LORD said to Moses, 'Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, "To your offspring I will give it." I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; but I will not go up among you, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.'**

**When the people heard this disastrous word, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments. For the LORD had said to Moses, 'Say to the people of Israel, "You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you [destroy you, eradicate you, burn you off the face of the earth]. So now take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do with you.'" Therefore the people of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments, from Mount Horeb onward."**

Now let me tell you what I think you're seeing here. You're seeing the glory of God. When I say the *glory of God* I mean the worth and value of God. God said, "I'm going to give you what you want. I'm going to make your dreams come true. I'm going to drive out your enemies so that you have no enemies, and I'm going to give you wealth and comfort and all that your heart desires, but you don't get me. You get what you want, but you don't get me."

The people thought this was a disastrous word, and they mourned. When God said, "That's what you want? I'll give it to you. I'll drive out your enemies. I'm going to give you great wealth, and I'm going to make you comfortable, but you don't get me," the people mourned. Their hearts broke. They took off their ornaments. They fell on the ground. They wept. What we're seeing here is a picture of the glory of God. It's kind of a throwback of the presence of God being among them.

In verses 7-11, we read that Moses would go meet with God in the Tent of Meeting, and when Moses met with God there would be this cloud that settled over the Tent of Meeting. The people would

then go into their tents and worship because God was among them. When the presence and power of God was among them they felt safe. They knew they would be taken care of. They knew they were loved, that they were valued. What's going on in this moment is God saying, "You can have stuff, money, and all that, but you don't get me," and fear and heartbreak rooted into the lives of these people, and they wept.

I'm going to confess something, and I'm going to just trust you with it. That's where we are. When I was growing up as a kid I was scared of the dark. Anybody else? I mean, scared of the dark. Like, crazy scared of the dark. I got this little bat from Six Flags and I had it under my bed, because who knows? I might have to break that thing out and handle some business. I just slept with this little bat in case you wanted to come in and get you some. I mean, I was just terrified of the dark.

We lived in a little tiny house, so my bedroom was closest to our living room. My parents did not go to bed when I went to bed. I don't know if your parents do. I try to go to bed about the same time as my kids. Life just seems to be not allowing that to happen. But what would happen is I was already scared of the dark. We didn't have your newfangled technology with the little night-light that turns on when the lights go off and then turns off when the lights turn on. They just shut the door.

So I'm afraid of the dark, I'm in a dark room, and now they have to shut the door because they don't plan on going to bed. What would happen is, terrified of the dark, what I could see was just a little sliver of light coming underneath my door, and that sliver of light let me know I was not alone, that Mom and Dad were in the other room, that if something were to go wrong, if something scary were to happen, Mom and Dad were right there. That little sliver of light was what gave me confidence that I was going to be fine even though there was darkness all the way around me.

I don't know how you work, kids, but in the dark room growing up, things would look like something else. Like, I had a poster of Jordan, but when the lights went off it turned into a monster coming to get me. I don't know how that happened. That little sliver of light was... "No, no. Someone stronger than I am, more powerful than I am, and more able than I am is here to protect me."

God was saying to them, "I'm going to give you what you want, but that sign of my presence that led to your worship is gone. You will not get me. You'll just get what you want or what you *think* you want." One of the ways we know God is glorious is that God is better than everything. I want to walk through his promises here, and I want us to just have a really honest talk about them.

Here's what God is going to give the people of Israel. "I'm going to eradicate your enemies." The people mourned about this. Why? Because genuine peace doesn't come in a world that lacks enemies; it comes from our Creator. You don't get peace because you don't have enemies; you have peace because you're in that space in which God created you to be: in his presence and power.

He offered them a stunning amount of wealth, a land flowing with milk and honey, the envy of the nations, but wealth without the presence and power of God to mold our hearts into generous people poisons the soul, corrupts the spirit, and is bankrupt. And then comfort. Once again, a land flowing with milk and honey, no enemies, wealth, comfort.

If any of this can resonate with us, surely we know that despite our Sleep Number and despite being able to dial in air conditioning and heating to where we want it, we haven't found the rest our souls long for. In fact, it seems that the more comfort made available to us the more anxious and disturbed we become as people. We're a far more medicated people than we've ever been with a lot more opportunities to entertain and walk in comfort. Something is going on.

They mourn, because the thing they need most is now being denied even though he's laying before them all they think they desire. Jesus is going to teach on this idea in Mark 8:36 like this: **"For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?"** My guess is if you have a background in church or maybe you haven't but you've just seen something on Facebook... This is the old saying, "There are no U-Hauls behind hearses."

What good is it if you make a billion dollars and are a titan of industry? You're going to die, and it all stays here. My guess is that you've heard this text more in line of, "You're going to die and leave it all behind." But what if you could be alive, gaining the world and forfeiting your soul? We know this is true. If you're not a sociologist... I would never encourage you to do this. I'm going to do it. Pick up a copy of *People* magazine or *Us Weekly* and flip through the pages.

People with wealth and fame beyond most of our imaginations have an extremely difficult time staying in any kind of stable relationship, tend to be consistently in strife, consistently broken, and yet they're the people we're like, *"That's what we want."* No, that's a picture of creation without Creator. That's "Have it, but you don't get me." God is, when all is said and done, the dream or the longing underneath our dream. We all have these dreams for our lives, and yet the longing underneath that dream is actually satisfied only in the presence and power of God himself.

I'm using this illustration with permission. My wife, sweet Lauren, wrote an essay when I think she was a fourth grader. In the essay, she wrote how she was going to grow up and be a famous actress, and she was going to marry a famous director, and they were going to live in Los Angeles. You're reading that and just feeling like a failure. You're like, "You live in Dallas. You are far from a famous director." It started to make sense of things, because if Lauren's family ever videoed and that video camera got on her...

Kids, there was this thing called VHS. We don't have time. Not a phone. Like, a camera you had to carry. Whenever the camera would get to Lauren, she would immediately turn on actress mode. One of my favorite videos is she was putting up like a Gatorade thing. It was an old-school sports drink called 10-K. It didn't make it. She was putting up this bottle of 10-K, and she realized her mom was filming her. So she had the refrigerator door. She shut the fridge. She was like, "Are you thirsty? Would you like your thirst quenched? 10-K is... Mm, it's delicious."

There's nothing wrong with wanting to be an actress, wanting to be a professional athlete, wanting to be a king of industry, wanting to be successful in business, wanting a good marriage, a fairy tale wedding. None of that is wrong. In fact, I would encourage you to love and desire all of those things with the understanding that the real longing underneath that dream cannot be fulfilled in the fulfillment of that dream. There is a longing inside of us for validation. Every human soul you will ever meet needs, wants, has to have someone validate it.

Like, "Someone tell me I matter. Someone tell me I mean something. Someone tell me that I am loved." It doesn't matter how grisly they look, how hard they look. Every human soul is crying out, "Someone validate me." So they become valedictorians. They become athletes. They become body builders. They become partiers. They look for relationships with people who might validate them. We can't help ourselves. So our dreams are being birthed out of a longing for someone to validate us. "Tell me that I matter. Tell me that I mean something."

Again, play sports. Work out. Look mean with a furrowed brow if you want. Just know that what's going on in the deeper parts of your soul is a longing for someone to say, "Hey, you matter. You're okay. You're okay as you are. This dream won't get you..." Again, pick up a copy of *People* or *Us Weekly*. It just screams "Dream achieved and found lacking." What we're seeing in this first passage is God is glorious. He is the thing we most desperately need, and if we get everything we want and don't have him, we lost everything. God is glorious. He is better than everything else in life.

What ends up happening, then, is Moses argues back after God says, "You go. I'm not going with you. I'll send an angel. I'll kill all of your enemies. I'll establish you in the land. I'll get you wealthy and all that you want, but you don't get *me* anymore." The people mourn this, and it's a dreadful word, and then Moses pushes back against this decree, and we see it in verse 16 of chapter 33. This is Moses speaking back to God.

**"For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people? Is it not in your going with us, so that we are distinct, I and your people, from every other people on the face of the earth?"** This is a powerful argument from Moses back to the Lord, where the Lord is going, "Go, and I'll give you wealth. I'll give you comfort. I'll give you power. I'll rid the world of enemies for you, but you don't get *me*."

Moses says, "What makes us distinct among the nations? Is not the thing that makes us distinct *you*? It's not that we get everything we want. It's not that we get all of the things the world has and say, 'See? Our God gives us what you're after.' No, no. It's in your presence and power that we're made distinct." It's not that Christians are all going to be wealthy, we're all going to be healthy, and all of our diseases are going to be healed. What we get is the presence and power of God in our lives.

So what does that look like? Well, it looks like two things, and I'm just going to keep talking about this. I want this to become a part of our vernacular here, the way we think about and talk about the Christian life. The presence and power of God works itself out over a long period of time in everyday faithfulness.

Yesterday morning at 11:00 I did the funeral for David Vierling. Last weekend at Easter, his wife Paula was one of the ones during "Because He Lives" who walked out on stage and said, "My husband is currently in hospice care. We're waiting for him to die, but because he lives I can face tomorrow." On Tuesday morning at about 12:30, David, just like he lived his whole life, behind the scenes, not wanting to make a fuss, went on in to glory.

When I got the text from Paula at about 5:00 a.m. and started to drive over there, I thought to myself, "Lord, please give me this finish line." David was 66. That's young. When I was 28 and became pastor I wouldn't have said that. I'm saying it now. That is ridiculously young. But David has two grown daughters who love Jesus, who have husbands who love Jesus, who are raising their children in a fear of the Lord.

That wasn't a lightning bolt. That was 30 years of faithfulness, failing, trusting, getting back up. He loved his wife Paula faithfully for over 40 years through highs and lows. It hasn't always been roses. I'm not trying to say this man is perfect. I don't think he *was* perfect. In fact, I know he wasn't. I just saw ordinary faithfulness behind the scenes, living itself out for four or five decades in a row.

What does it look like to be marked distinctly by the presence and power of God? Everyday faithfulness while praying and pleading for miraculous spiritual breakthrough. We're a people that expect God to do big miraculous things, and we ask for it, and we ask for it because we know God is willing, and then we hold it all with open hands.

I pled with the Lord for him to heal David Vierling. In my 14 years here, we've seen 14 cases of miraculous, supernatural healing. We've prayed for thousands, but by definition what makes it a miracle is it's miraculous. We've seen hospice called, "Get your house in order," 10 years later. We got to see that and testify to that and celebrate that.

I was asking the Lord to give David another 10, 12, or 15 years here among us, and I'm doing it selfishly. I'm doing it because patriarchs are getting hard to find. Men who over a 40-year period of time have faithfully loved their families and served Christ, imperfect men who just stay at it, men who you can take a 20-year-old and go, "Like *that*." Not perfect, just everyday getting up, getting back in the Word after two months of getting out. Just get back up and keep walking.

We need men like that, and David was that man. I could take a 50-year-old and go, "Like *this* guy." Those guys are harder to find. It's not always their fault. It's just harder to find them. The Lord said, "No." I don't know why. I don't have to wrestle with the Lord. He's God; I'm not. I know I don't know. It wasn't like I was like, "How about one of *these* four? Give me David. I'll give you these four." That's not the way it works. I know some of you are like, "I think I might be on that list." Maybe.

I'm wanting this, asking for this kind of supernatural breakthrough. The kingdom of God breaks through now. It is both future and present. We want at times and want to expect at times the kingdom of God to break into the ordinary and do the miraculous. Don't let anyone tell you to choose one of those.

Don't let anyone turn Christianity into this kind of dry grind to glory, and don't let anyone tell you, "No, it always has to be spectacular." God accomplishes big, beautiful, amazing things slowly over

time as we faithfully put one foot in front of the next and then encourages along the way every once in a while with this incursion into enemy-occupied territory. This is what it looks like.

So from here... God says, "You don't get me." Moses says, "If we don't have you, we're not distinct. We don't matter if we don't have you. You can give us all that, but we don't get you. If you give us the dream but don't solve the longing underneath the dream, we're to be pitied." Through tears and snot and angst, "Please don't give us all of this without you. We need you. We want you."

Then Moses says to God, "Show me your glory," and God's response is, "No one can see my face and live. I am holy. You are a sinner. To see me would lead to you being consumed, destroyed, utterly vanishing, but I *will* let my goodness pass before you as I hide you in the cleft of a rock, put you in a cave, and I *will* pronounce my name to you." A name in the Bible is oftentimes like a résumé. "Here's who I am." So God is going to reveal his name. Exodus 34:5-7:

**"The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.'"**

If you just followed me through that text... If there was string, the tension that just was formed in that text is stunning. Let's walk through it again very briefly. The first thing God says as his goodness passes by the cleft of the rock is that he is a God of mercy. God does not give his children the punishment they deserve. He is gracious. He is a God who shows his people unearned favor. He is slow to anger. God does not have a hair trigger. He is slow to anger. He absorbs and absorbs and absorbs. He is not quick to anger.

I love the next line. He is abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Surely, if you have children, you've experienced that moment where everybody wants a snack, and you're like, "Oh, we have those fruit roll-ups; let's get them," and then you get in there, and you have three kids and one fruit roll-up left in the box. Everybody has their heart set on some fruity chews, and then you don't have enough, so as a good parent you try to solve it. "Let's just cut this into thirds."

What happens in that moment is now you're constricted by lacking and have to make something work. God never works that way. He's abounding. It's abundant. He opens up the box of fruity chews, and they explode all over the house. There's always plenty. Abounding in what? Love. You remember the longing under the dream? "Do I matter? Will someone validate me?" You open *that* box, and it explodes with abounding love and faithfulness. God never runs out.

Get over yourself. He doesn't run out. Quit wallowing in self-pity. He can't run out. He's abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Then he's forgiving. That's awesome, but then there's this tension that's created. "**...forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation.**"

Do you feel the tension? "I am a God abounding in love, abounding in faithfulness. I forgive iniquity, forgive sin, and I will not pass over sin. I will revisit the punishment of sin on the third, fourth, fifth generations." As I said at the beginning, God hates sin. He's serious about it. He never looks past it. He never thinks it's cute. I don't know if, as a parent, you have a serious moment going on, and a kid says something clever, and you're going to be like, "Go to your room. All right, get back down here."

God never does that. It's never cute to him. He hates it. So now we have this tension. Then to make things even weirder, from verse 10 to verse 35, God reenters the covenant with his people. He's like, "I'm going to forgive sin, and I'm going to destroy sin. I will go with you now into the Promised Land." Then for the rest of the Old Testament, God forgives sin and God punishes sin. They can't live *without* God, but they can't live *with* him because of their sin.

The real question is...*How can this holy God live among his people?* How can we see the face of God and live? How can we have the longing underneath the dream satisfied? Well, in John, chapter 1, we read in verse 17, "**For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.**" What Moses brings is the Law. "Here are the rules that must be obeyed to walk in the path of life." When Jesus comes, he doesn't come with tablets.

It's also important to note in John 1:14 we see that we can see and behold the face of Jesus. Whereas Moses couldn't even hardly look at the back of God without being jammed into a cave, now we get to look at Jesus face-to-face. We see the glory of God and the presence and power of God in the coming of Jesus Christ who lives a life we cannot live and died our death so that we might be

resurrected in his life and made new so that we're a people marked by the presence and power of God.

When we talk about God's glory, what we're saying is that he is better than anything else we could ever pursue, want, or grasp. The thing we're going to have to fight against all the days of our lives is letting other things define our identity and who we are. That's just going to be a fight our whole life, because in a desire to be validated we'll find our niche and we'll want that niche to define us.

I'm a husband. I'm a father. I do *this* for work. If you're a first through fifth grader here, you're a football player. You are a dancer. You are a softball player. You are a soccer player. Really, all of those things are not the way we should define ourselves. We are first and foremost children of God. It's the one thing that can never be taken from us.

If you seek validation anywhere else other than the glory of God, you *will* be let down, you *will* be disappointed, because what happens when you're no longer the smartest? For some of you, you're like, "That can't..." No, it's coming for you. Eventually, you're not going to be the smartest. You're not going to be the fastest. You're not going to be the brightest. You're not going to be the strongest. It is coming for you.

If you have defined your reality and your accomplishments in your natural ability, you have set yourself up for heartbreak and depression. No, no, no. We are children of God. Our disciplined pursuit is of the presence and power of God in our lives. Then when I'm not smartest, that's fine, because I'm still who I am. When I'm not the athlete I thought I was, which came early for me, then, man, I've got it. I know who I am in Christ.

You just get to enjoy life in a way where you're not hindered and crushed every time someone else sings better than you do or teaches better than you do or romances their spouse better than you do or has more stuff than you do or gets that promotion you wanted and didn't get. You're not crushed because you don't matter. You've been validated by the glory of God. That's why it's so important that this become our singular pursuit.

I'm not telling you not to enjoy sports and not have fun and not do the best you can at work, to be the best worker you can, to seek that promotion. I want you to pursue all of that. Just understand the longing underneath it all can only be found in Christ. Some of us never get into that presence and power because we're convinced the mercy of God is too thin to have us.

Let's have a quick talk. Everyone knows you're imperfect. The closer people are to you, the more aware they are, which means the only people you're fooling right now with your façade of perfection are probably those who follow you on Instagram. "Man, this dude eats amazing every night. This woman's marriage is unbelievable, a model of what I hope mine is." But the closer people get to you, the more they see.

You can do two things with that. You can keep people at arm's distance, become kind of a closed system where you have this shell of bold put-togetherness but inside are broken and frenetic. That eventually is going to disintegrate, not only make you miserable most of the days of your life. Or you can rest on the mercy of God in Christ that, by the way, if you look over here at the cross, has already outed you.

You're far worse than you think you are, but he loves you far more than you think he does. This is the gospel. It's a stunning reality. You're far worse than you think you are. You're like, "Yeah, I have a couple of things," but if we would actually start to have a conversation about what's underneath those things, it's far darker in you than you think it is, but it hasn't overcome the mercy of God in Christ.

So if you're not a Christian and you're ever wondering what in the world we're always celebrating in here, we're celebrating *this*. God is glorious, but he's merciful. If he's glorious and not merciful that's not good news, and if he's merciful but not glorious that is not good news, but because he is glorious and merciful we celebrate. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. I thank you, as King David said, that you are better than life. I pray that our lives would be marked as though that were true. Spirit of God, give us a zeal to pursue you, to know you, to walk in your presence and power. Would you create a single-mindedness in us that makes us an odd people, a distinct people, that walk in power?

We pray for the strength to be faithful in the ordinary, and we ask, Holy Spirit of God, for breakthrough, for supernatural divine power in our lives, for deliverance from demons and freedom from bondage and healing from diseases for the glory of your name, not for our good. We're not trying to show out here. We want *you* to show out here.

Do those things only you can. We're so limited. You are not. We can only do so much, but there is no limit to your presence and power. So we ask have your way with us, Lord. Move in power. Move in might. Strengthen us in the day-to-day obedience, as moms and dads, as sons and daughters, and pour your power out on us. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.

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