Series Road Map

**Series Overview:** How we engage with God is a direct reflection of what we think about God. Unfortunately we often forget just how incredible God is and as a result, we feel apathetic in our faith or unimpressed at best. This series is designed to reengage our imagination and our faith. By reminding ourselves of God’s incredible creativity, His amazing power, and unconditional love, we set ourselves up to sit in wonder and fall in love with God (again).

**Week Overview:** This week we talk about God’s power. He isn’t weak and distant. He is mighty and present. Ready, willing, and able to fight every battle we encounter.

**Grab the Room (Intro):** What does God look like?

**Tension (whats the struggle):** Our image of God is too often closer to a pathetic, desperate, lovesick person – not the all-powerful God that He is. We picture Him as far away when He’s closer than our own skin.

**Text (+ Supporting Text):** Phillippians 2:12, 1John 4:18, Psalm 77:14, Deuteronomy 10:21, Matthew 22:29

**THP**:  God’s power is constantly on display through His miracles

**Application (call to action)**:  Miracle Prayer

Scripture - highlighted yellow

Illustration/Video/Object Lesson

Personal Story

What comes to mind when you picture God?

Maybe you’ve seen enough cheesy pictures of God being this old, bearded white guy wearing a robe and looking all serious like He’s just waiting to smite someone.

Or maybe you imagine a sweet old motherly black lady, like in the book “The Shack”, who’s always cooking up something great and knows just what to say all of the time.

Or maybe you just finished reading in the Old Testament and you conjure images of raw power. A force. Like wind or fire or lightning.

So what about it? Turn to the people around you and answer that question: what comes to mind when you picture God? (give a minute or two pause)

One of my favorite quotes comes from a pastor named A.W. Tozer. He wrote:

*What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us… Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the Church is always God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at a given time may say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.*

In short, nothing about you is more important than what you picture God to be like.

Our view of God is so important, but we tend to just casually observe the Bible to get a good enough view of God to decide if we think He is worth following or not.  And yet we’re warned in Philippians 2:12 to work out our faith with fear and trembling. Does this mean that we’re supposed to live in fear? To be in a constant state of worry and anxiety over whether or not we belong to God and God loves us? Of course not! 1John 4:18 tells us that There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

So what does it mean to work out our faith with fear and trembling? It means having a right view of God. And a right view of God removes our ability to be passive and disinterested. It leaves us with no option but to fall to our knees in awe, in respect, and in reverence! Fear and trembling are a result of wonder, not terror!

Personal story about your view of God… From the moment I was born, my parents had me in church. Sunday morning, Sunday night, Tuesday evening local mission work, and Wednesday night Bible study. I was raised in the church. Even so, my view of God was so off, it was shocking. I knew God was the creator of everything, the source of so many miracles, and the redeemer of my heart. But in all of that, I still viewed him as a little weak. Pathetic almost. I know it sounds wild and maybe you’re shocked or insulted to hear it. Maybe you’re not shocked at all because secretly you’ve had the same thought. But I came to view God as desperate. Like a schoolboy who has a huge crush on a girl. And he doesn’t care how mean she is, how little attention she shows, what she’s like, or how unfaithful she is to him. He just wants her to be with him. That was my view of God. That he’s just begging for scraps of our affection. It’s no wonder that for a majority of my early years, my faith didn’t impact my life at all.

Francis Chan writes in his book, “Crazy Love”,

*The core of the problem isn’t the fact that we’re lukewarm, halfhearted, or stagnant Christians. The crux of it all is why we are this way, and it is because we have an inaccurate view of God. We see Him as a benevolent Being who is satisfied when people manage to fit Him into their lives in some small way. We forget that God never had an identity crisis. He knows that He’s great and deserves to be the center of our lives. Jesus came humbly as a servant, but He never begs us to give Him some small part of our lives. He commands everything from His followers.*

God is so many things. It’s impossible to describe Him. He is loving, He is gracious, He is with us, He is intimate, He defends us, He guides us, He counsels us… the list can go on and on! But tonight we’re going to focus on just one aspect of God. A character trait that should leave us in awe and reverence, in fear and trembling. That trait is power. Raw, overwhelming, incalculable, unpredictable power!

THP GOD’S POWER IS CONSTANTLY ON DISPLAY THROUGH HIS MIRACLES. And Scripture is full of these examples of incredible power:

* The Exodus story is God’s power on display over and over again!
* He sends the plagues over Egypt in order to free His people from slavery
* He parts the sea before the Israelites so they can escape pharoah and his army
* God provides food and water for his people in the desert, food they didn’t even need to work for
* God leads His people through the wilderness as a pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire at night
* God halts the sun in the sky so that Israel can overtake their enemy on the battlefield
* God keeps Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from burning in the fiery furnace they were thrown into. Not even their robes were singed!
* God sends a large fish to swallow a disobedient prophet that spits him out onto his mission field
* Jesus raises Lazarus, after being dead for days
* Jesus commands the wind and storm to cease
* The greatest miracle of all: Jesus dies on the cross, defeats death & sin, and is raised back to life!

But maybe you’ve heard these before. Maybe these stories seem ancient and unreal. Maybe you still want more. You want to hear it from people that look like you, in a world that looks like yours, and situations that reflect your own. And here’s the good news: God’s power is on display still! Miracles weren’t exclusive to the dusty regions of Israel thousands of years ago. God is as active now as He’s ever been! The words of the Bible are still as true and living today as they’ve ever been. Check out this video and see how many miracle stories you hear from this one group’s mission trip to Haiti…

[play video]

God’s power is always on display! Whether it’s the ferocity of a thunderstorm, God defending His people, God providing in dire circumstances, or just doing what we thought couldn’t be done. THP GOD’S POWER IS CONSTANTLY ON DISPLAY THROUGH HIS MIRACLES.

And so with hearts filled with wonder, we lift our voices in praise! We join the ancient writers who did the exact same thing when they saw God perform miracles in their midst:

Psalm 77:14 You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples.

Deuteronomy 10:21 He is your praise; he is your god, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes.

So lets circle back to our question from earlier. What comes to mind when you picture God? Are you fooled into thinking that He’s pitiful for so jealously desiring you? Do you see Him as a God who’s distant and uncaring? Or are you working out your faith with fear and trembling, knowing that while God is all-powerful, unpredictable, and ferocious, He is also wholly good and trustworthy?

We’re going to close tonight by having a time of prayer together. I don’t know what’s been going through your mind all night. Maybe you’ve been thinking back to times where you’ve seen God do incredible things and your heart is just bursting being reminded of God’s incredible power. But maybe you’re here tonight in desperate need to see God’s incredible power come alive in your life. Maybe you’re struggling at school and don’t know where to turn. Maybe your friend group is slowly shifting and it breaks your heart to see distance where there was once intimacy. Maybe things with your family feel like they couldn’t be worse.

Where are you? What miracle do you need to see?

We’ve got volunteers and life group leaders all over the room waiting to pray with you. So in this moment, take some time to communicate to your heavenly father what it is you need. Approach a leader for prayer. Take a friend if you want. Bring your lifegroup. Whatever you need to do. But lets not waste an opportunity to lift others up and be lifted up in prayer. Because this right here: this dedicated time of prayer and closeness with God just might be the catalyst you need to launch your circumstances into the miracle realm.

* And when you ask, bring as much confidence as you can muster. It’s easy to doubt that a miracle can occur. It’s even easier to doubt that a miracle can occur when we’ve taken our eyes off of Jesus for so long. Our problem is the same as the original hearers of the book of Matthew and the Israelites Jesus was speaking to when he said… Matthew 22:29 Jesus replied, “Your mistake is that you don’t know the Scriptures and you don’t know the power of God.”

[Guided life group/miracle prayer closing ]