

“Gods That Never Existed to Begin With” // Exodus 20:4; 32:1–6 // *Unknown God*, pt 3

Preview

Let me tell you what just happened... At all 10 campuses of the TSC, a different story was heard about God’s saving work in someone’s life. Isn’t it awesome to be a part of a church where we get to God doing these kinds of things?

Can we just take a moment and express thanksgiving to God for how he’s working in our church!

Last week was an amazing week—we had over 14,000 at our services, and several people come forward to make decisions.

And **let me go ahead and explain** to you now that today is the day we are extending an invitation to you to be **baptized as a public profession of your faith** if you never have done so.

At the end of every service at every campus, we’ll offer an invitation for you to come and be baptized *today*.

- **Baptism is the public ceremony**, if you will, of deciding to follow Jesus; the **official declaration** that we are going all-in with Jesus.
- **Jesus commands us to do it after** we trust him as Savior, and there are some of you who have yet to do that.

Some of you say, **“What’s the big deal, it’s just a ritual?”** It doesn’t really affect my faith on way or the other.

- Yes, but **it’s a command** Jesus gives us, and it’s not a good practice in your relationship with God to disobey Jesus in any area; and **it has significant spiritual effects** in your life. God uses it to solidify and mark your faith.

Some of you are **brand new Christians** and so you’ve never done this; others of you have been **Christians for a while** but simply never taken this step. Today is your day.

Some of you were **baptized as a child**, or as a baby, before you really understood who Jesus was. We want to invite you to ratify that decision your parents made by choosing to get baptized on your own—in Scripture it’s always a public profession of *your* faith.

Here’s what I want all of you to think about for the next few minutes: Am I prepared to follow Jesus wherever he leads, and if so, am I willing to demonstrate that by obeying him in this area?

You might say, “But I didn’t come prepared.” We are prepared for you. We have all you’ll need—towels, modest black shorts and T-shirts, changing areas, hair product—we have it all.

- **We’ll come back to this at the end...**

Introduction

Exodus 20 if you have your Bible. Today is our 3rd and final message of “Unknown God,” a short series in which we are asking the question, “Can we actually **know** whether God exists? And, if so, **HOW** we can know that?” We’ve been trying to take an honest look at the question of the existence of God.

During the 1st week we looked at how **creation points us toward a Creator**. Creation, the Apostle Paul tells us, is **like a voice** constantly calling out to us, suggesting to us that God is there. Some people come up with reasons to ignore that voice, or **reason themselves** out of it, but it’s an **instinctive** response to creation.

The 2nd week we saw how there’s **really good reasons to believe that the Voice of God** was speaking in Jesus.

Today, I want us to look at certain distortions of God that people reject, thinking they are rejecting the real God, when in fact what they are rejecting is a distortion that ought to be rejected.

That's the **irony—the tragedy**: in rejecting these false views of God (that ought to be rejected), they miss the real one.

The tendency to reshape or re-imagine God in a new form has been a **major problem** for all of human history. Which is probably why God addresses it in **the 2nd commandment**.

2nd Commandment: “You shall not make for yourself an *image* in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.” The key word is ‘image.’ This is a command to **not add a shape in our minds to God** that he has not given to himself.

We have to be **careful not to confuse this commandment** with the 1st one, which says:

1st Commandment: “You shall have *no other gods* before me.”¹

These two might **sound similar**, but they are different. The first is about worshipping the *wrong* gods. The second is about worshipping the right God *in the wrong way*.

We violate the 2nd commandment when we add something to God—**some image**—that goes beyond, or contrary to, what God tells us about himself in his word.

The **fact that this command comes 2nd** of all of them shows us it is something we are likely to break, even though most of us don't think about it that often.

This was, in fact, the **command that Israel literally broke before Moses** had even returned from the mountain where he received the 10 commandments! (**32:5–6**)

- Moses had had gotten delayed up on the mountain with God, and was later in returning than the people expected. The people panicked: Moses is dead, God has abandoned us.
- So, they **took off their jewelry, melted it down**, and constructed a golden calf to represent God.
- The **promises of an *invisible* God** were not enough for them, not when there were **real enemies** around and **real needs** to be met. They wanted a God they could touch and see and hang onto.

Notice **the narrator makes clear** that with the golden calf Israel was not worshipping a *new* god, but the true God in their own way:

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to *the LORD*. (*LORD* in all caps indicates God's *covenant* name given specially to Israel. This golden image became for them God “as-we-would-like-him-to-be.”) And they celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry” (Exodus 32:5–6). “Pagan revelry” means “open orgy.” Literally in Hebrew it says, “Franklin Street.”

They added **an image to God** that they thought would work better for them. But this new God was **insufficient to save them**.

- This new god **couldn't speak to them** or comfort them, they had to dance for him!
- He **couldn't even move himself** from place to place—they had to carry him!
- **(What a terrible trade!** The **true God had promised to supply all their needs, promised to protect them when they were afraid, satisfy them when they were thirsty, and feed them when they were hungry. One day, he would give his life to redeem them. They **traded this God for an image of a cow** made out of left-over jewelry.)**

¹ (*PUT THIS ABOVE THE PREVIOUS WITH THEM BOTH DISPLAYED ON THE SCREEN AT ONCE)

- Inevitably **this image of god would fail them**, because he wasn't real, but something they projected onto God.
- **And here's the irony**—*when* that golden calf failed them, people would be like, "See, God's not real." **But was what it that was not real?** The golden calf was not God's idea, it was theirs.

Furthermore, this image of God corrupted them spiritually. That's why the author points out their worship led to an orgy.

- **If our hearts are spiritually dark**, which Scripture tells us they are, then any god we project out of them will also be dark.
- **So rather than transforming** their dark hearts, he just reflected them back to us.

So, let me repeat: Satan's strategy from the beginning has been to twist our view of God beyond what God has said about himself, and then have us reject that distorted view thinking that we are rejecting the true God.

- It's the **ultimate chutzpah**, when you think about it (You know the Jewish definition of chutzpah? A kid that kills his mom and dad and then throws himself on the mercy of the court because he's an orphan?)
- Satan's chutzpah is to lie to us about God and then have us reject that distorted image of God, thinking that we are rejecting the real thing.

Let me show you a few places he does this in the Bible, and then I wanted to spend most of our time showing you where he does it in our culture.

First, back at the beginning. Satan's first deception in the Garden of Eden went like this: "[1] Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field... And he said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." **Look at what happens—it is subtle but you can see it.** Satan presents God to Eve as an "Insecure God" (Eve = Insecure God), who makes rules to

keep us down so that we will not threaten his position. His rules are arbitrary and oppressive because they come not from wisdom but jealousy.

- Eve, of course, recognizes such a God would not be worthy of worship, and rejects him.
- See what we are doing?

Here's another: Many of the Jews in Jesus' day, like Thomas, were convinced that if God really loved them, he would liberate them from Roman oppression immediately. (Thomas = Instant-Deliverance God) So, when Jesus did not do that, they rejected him.

Job in the Bible doubted because Satan planted in his heart the idea that Job should be able immediately to understand the reasoning and justice behind whatever God did. Let's call this the (Job = Immediately-Understandable God). And so, when Job couldn't figure out what God was doing, he assumed God must not exist.

When God finally appeared to Job, he basically said, "Job, why would you assume you could understand all my ways?" Then asks him a **litany of questions** like: "Job, where does the lightning come from? Can you create stars? And he says, Job, if you don't even understand the answers to questions about nature, do you really think you are in a place to understand my secret counsels?" **Immediately-understandable God is a myth.**

Once more: Satan's primary strategy has been to spin up distorted conceptions about God and then destroy our faith when they let us down. To note, there are 8,747 false images of God in the Bible. (I will not be going over all of them).

Here's what I want to do today. It will be a little different. I want to give you the top few distortions of God I see him using today. (This is a list I have put together from others,² as well as a few of my own).

Goosebumps God

- **This is the idea that if God is real**, you will always be able to feel him. He'll always give you goosebumps, feelings of peace, overpowering emotions in your heart, and so, if you can't feel him, he must not be there.
- **But where does the Bible ever say that we'll always be able to feel God?**
- Lots of people in the Bible couldn't feel the presence of God even when he was there.
- **So much of the Psalms** comes from believers saying, God, where are you? Like **Psalm 88:14**, "O LORD, why do you cast my soul away? Why do you hide your face from me?" The Psalm ends with **(18)** "You have distanced... me, darkness is my closest friend." (These are the kinds of Psalms you get to in your Bible reading and you're not quite sure what to do with them).
- **Even Jesus on the cross cried out**, "God, where are you?"
- **C.S. Lewis wrote about a time** he didn't sense God's presence in his life: "A door slammed in [my] face, and a sound of bolting and double bolting on the inside. After that, silence.... There are no lights in the windows. It feels like an empty house.... Why is God so present a commander in our time of prosperity and so very absent a help in time of trouble?" Somehow this never makes it onto everyone's Facebook page of "favorite C.S. Lewis quotes."

The God of constant Goosebumps doesn't exist. We made him up.

The real God tells us to **walk not by feeling**, but by faith.

² This list is composed of names I borrow from Andy Stanley (Atheism 2.0—The God of the No Testament), Craig Groeschel (I Want to Believe, But...), and some I've come up with on my own.

- A lot of Christians base their understanding of how God feels about them on how they feel—"I feel like God is absent, or distant..."
- **Our feelings are not reliable indicators of reality.**
 - If I wake up tomorrow and say, "I don't feel married." That doesn't change the fact that I am married.
- Your feelings don't have brains. Your mind is supposed to think for them, and tell them what to feel.
- This is why we find the **Psalms writers** often talking to themselves in the Psalms. **Psalm 103**, "Bless the Lord, oh my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name." Who is he talking to? Himself. He's telling himself what to think. He's saying, "Your feelings are wrong. This—what God says—is true, not what I feel."
- We don't *feel our way into our beliefs*, but believe our way into our feelings.

Goosebumps God doesn't exist. I'm not surprised you quit believing in him...

Here's another one...

Smooth-Sailing God³

- With "Smooth-Sailing God" we assume that if God is on our side, life will work out great.
- And so, **when bad things happen** to good people, we assume there must not be a God.
 - Or this is the **God to whom the athlete who quotes Phil 4:13** before he shoots foul shots appeals. *If Christ is in me, I can make this foul shot.*
 - Whenever I see 2 wrestlers who both have that tattooed to their arm, I think, "Oh, *this is going to be interesting.*" God vs. God. I wonder who knows the verse better? That guy has it in Greek—I bet he'll win."

³ *KEEP ONE RUNNING SLIDE WITH ALL OF THESE, ADDING TO IT AS WE GO. IF I REFERENCE A VERSE IN THE MIDST, FLASH TO THE VERSE WHILE I'M TALKING ABOUT IT, AND THEN GO BACK TO THE SCREEN WITH THE GROWING LIST OF FAKE GODS.

- But **where does Scripture say that bad, unfortunate or unfair** things will not happen to good people? You didn't get that from the Bible.
- **Think about it: Christianity started with a horrible thing happening to a very good person.**
 - **The early Christian movement was built on** really good people with very bad things happening to them.
- So **where did you get the idea that smooth-sailing is the proof of the presence of God?** You did not get that from Christian teaching.
 - If you lost faith in smooth-sailing God, **GOOD!** You are exactly right. He does not exist.
- What Scripture **does** tell us that is God will never abandon us, even in pain, and that ultimately, he is using all pain for our good and his glory.
 - **Sometimes God prospers us financially,** or in sports, or relationally—and sometimes he prospers us spiritually even when those things are falling apart.
 - **To go back to Phil 4:13,** Paul quoted that when he was bankrupt, in prison, and most of his friends had turned on him. In vs. 11 he says, “God has showed me how to be happy both when I have nothing and when I have it all... I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”
 - **The “all things” he is referring to** means “smooth sailing” or “rough seas.”

Closely related to that...

On-Demand God

- This is the God we believe will **always give us what we ask...** as long as our requests are **fair** and **thoughtful.**
 - If it's reasonable, and we really are convinced we need it, God will always give it to us just as we expect.
 - And so, of course, when God doesn't deliver, we assume he doesn't really exist.
- But **where did you get this idea** of God?

- **Personally, I am glad that God does not exist:** If God gave me everything I'd asked for when I was 15 or 16 my life would be a wreck!
 - I think about some of the girls I asked God to **make fall in love with me!** Sheww. Dodged the bullet there.
 - This might be the **only place I agree with Garth Brooks,** “*I thank God for unanswered prayer.*”
- **When Jesus gave us the model prayer,** he started it off **3 phrases** that debunk ODG:
 - He's our Father. I'm praying to my Dad, who knows and desires best for me. **A lot of my son's requests** I don't give to him because I love him. He really wants **his own iPad...**
 - Your kingdom come—ultimately, God, this is not about my prosperity but your kingdom. And I acknowledge that **what's best for me** personally in a situation may not be best for the kingdom, and vice-versa.
 - Your will be done—ultimately God, your will is better than mine. I don't know what you know, so I can trust you.
- Only when our hearts have been protected by the worship, celebration and surrender of these phrases that we are able to properly pray our requests.⁴
- **ODG doesn't exist,** yet many people walked away from the faith because they assumed this is what the Bible taught about God.

Here's another one...

Killjoy God

- This is the God who comes up with **endless rules** to oppress you, control you, and is just generally out to **kill your buzz.**
 - He **hates all pleasure,** especially sexual pleasure.
 - It **irritates him** to see you really have a good time.
 - He's **like the detention hall teacher** who wants to make sure you don't have any fun in the life you live on earth.

⁴ Paul Tripp, *New Morning Mercies*, April 2.

- In the words of that great theologian **Kanye West**, *“How come everything that’s supposed to be bad makes me feel so good?”*
 - **Let me ask: Where did you get that idea of God?**
 - The God of the Bible created joy and laughter and sex. About him the Psalm writer says: **Psalm 16:11**, *“In your presence is the fullness of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”* Fullness—joy that could not be any greater. Forevermore—could not last any longer.
 - Any guidelines are so that we can experience them to their fullness.
 - I think there are **2 reasons** people come to distort God in this way: **First, they just don’t trust God.**
 - **At the end of the day**, they just don’t think he’s a good God who desires the best for his children.
 - So, a little religion in your life is good, but if you get too serious, you are going to have an unhappy life.
 - **Let me ask you QUESTION, friend: Why would you trust Jesus with your eternal soul but not your earthly life?**
 - Surely, if he could handle your sin, he can handle your marriage, your finances, and your future.
 - **Sometimes, however, the idea of killjoy God comes from growing up in an environment where constant rules were put on you in the name of God**, and walking with God meant keeping all these regulations.
 - **At one of the schools I went to growing up**, they had rules for everything.
 - Couldn’t **drink dance or chew**, or mess around with girls who do...
 - **Dancing was the worst** of all the sins. You couldn’t have premarital sex because it might lead to dancing.
 - We could **only read the KJV** of Bible, because that’s what Jesus used, and we should too...
 - Let me tell you **where that mentality usually comes from**. It comes from thinking that God’s acceptance of us is based on how well we conform.
- **Jesus taught the opposite. There was a group of people in Jesus day I’m sure you’ve heard about called the Pharisees** who had come up with endless laws in order to make sure they were pleasing God.
 - You can **trace the Pharisees’ existence back to time of Ezra and Nehemiah** when Israel returned from captivity, where God had sent them because of their disobedience. Well, to make sure this never happened again, they came up with all these new laws to make sure they stayed on God’s good side.
 - They called it **the hedge about the law**. (EXPLAIN—like a hedge)
 - **65 different laws** about the Sabbath
 - **Mishnah**: over 800 pages of man-made laws
 - Jesus said, **“Your problem is you don’t understand God at all. He doesn’t accept you because of your outward conformity to a set of laws. He’s a Father who receives you by grace.”**
 - And **when you realize that**, you’ll start to love him and love others, and when that happens, you’ll obey all his laws naturally.
 - The **greatest commandment**, he said, is to LOVE GOD and LOVE OTHERS... when you keep that, you’ll keep all the others.
 - God doesn’t even like duty based obedience—you don’t have to make a law to compel me to eat a steak... God wants us to feel that way about him. He wants us to serve him because we love him.
 - That kind of heart cannot be produced by a set of laws, but an experience of grace.

Here’s another distortion I see...

Anti-Science God

- **Many people walked away from the faith** because they were told faith in God conflicted with the scientific method, and in college they felt like they had to choose between the **undeniable findings** of science and **unreliable teachings** of faith.
- I always want to say, **“Who told you that?”**

- **Christians launched the modern science movement**—people like Galileo, Newton, Francis Bacon, and today, people like Francis Collins—believed that **because God created** the universe, certain patterns were observable and identifiable.
- Scientific observation was new with Christianity, because there was no point in studying science in a world of pagan gods, where nature was at the whim of pantheistic gods. But Christians believed God gave us minds that were able to detect the order he had built into creation.
- **Christians, however**, are in part to blame for this distortion. **They have sometimes lazily used the Bible** beyond what it was intended for. I believe the Bible is God’s word, and that it is without error, but I also think you have to know how to read it.
 - **Galileo wisely said**, “*God gave us the Scriptures to tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go.*”
 - **That means the authors employed certain kinds of language** that took into account their limitations.
 - There are certain statements that are **poetic**, and **metaphorical**. That doesn’t mean they are wrong, just that they are not designed to be scientific statements.
 - **Let me give you an example**. Your 5-year-old says, “Where do babies come from?” What do you say? **Mommy’s tummy. Ever seen a new parent try to get into too much detail with their 5-year-old?** So, the experienced parent just says things simply. That’s different from the answer you give to a 15-year-old, and different still from the answer the professor gives to the medical student.
 - **Question:** Were you **wrong or misleading** when you answered your child that way? No. You were simply not attempting to speak on that level.
 - We continue to speak like this in many areas today. We say, for example, that **the sun rose or set**. But **the sun, of course, actually didn’t move**. We’re not lying when we say that, it’s just that our language here is not designed to convey scientific accuracy.
 - **A lot of the Bible** is the same way.

- **I believe the Bible—I believe every word of it is God’s word**. But know that it fits hand in hand with the other book that God wrote creation.
- **Sir Francis Bacon**, the architect of the scientific method, said that **God wrote two books**, and so when you encounter a contradiction, keep pressing on both books, because in the end you will find that they agree.
 - **I apply that to the Creation/Evolution debate**. I am constantly evaluating **what is the best way to understand the science and the Bible**, knowing the same author wrote them both. **When it seems like there is a conflict**, I’m going to keep pressing in on both, knowing when I understand both properly they will say the same thing.

Closely related to this is what I’ve heard called the...

Gap God

- *(By this we don’t mean a **God in competition with the American Eagle or Abercrombie gods**, but the God who conveniently shows up as an explanation for everything we cannot currently explain.)*
 - In ancient days, people didn’t know where **earthquakes** happened so they assumed God was stomping his foot. **Lightning was** power being thrown down from heaven.
 - Today, you’ll hear people invoke this God for any **unexplainable coincidence** as the activity of God.
 - (A guy pulls up **into a parking lot** and there is an open spot and he says, “How could this have happened apart from God? Oh, Jehovah Jireh, you knew I was running late. **Thank you, Jesus.**”)
- Well, maybe God **did give you the parking space**, but our entire faith cannot be in a God who shows up to explain the unexplainable.
 - Because, here’s the thing: *the list of physical things we cannot explain is getting smaller*. And that’s good. I, for one, hope that continues—don’t you hope that science will be able to cure more and more of our diseases?

- **The list of what we *can* explain is getting longer.**
- Gaps in our knowledge have more to do with our ignorance than they do God.
- Our **faith doesn't depend on God** being the plug-in for unexplainable phenomena.
 - If anything, the explainable is a **better argument** for God than the unexplainable.
 - If you are able to figure out everything about your **mobile phone**, the glass, the plastic, Wifi... if you could explain it to the micro-detail you would not then conclude that nobody made it. You're **understanding of it** does not remove the necessity for somebody to have created it.
- **Dawkins: "One of the truly bad effects of religion is that it teaches us that it is a virtue to be satisfied with not understanding."** **Richard Dawkins**⁵
 - **That's the Gap God. But God never said that!** That is a distortion spun out by Satan that we reject and walk away from thinking that we are walking away from the **real God** when in fact it's only a false characterization we are walking away from!

Guilt God

- **This is a big one.** This is the God who **holds your past mistakes** over your head and uses them to **belittle** you, threaten you, and keep you down.
- Technically, he may love you, but he definitely doesn't really like you. **You get on his nerves.**
- **And so, you spend most of your life** trying to get away from this God, and when you finally get rid of him you feel so liberated.

Well, if you are **one of those people who have left the guilt God** behind, let me say: Congratulations. Because that God doesn't exist.

⁵ Dawkins, *God Delusion*, 126.

The real God says, "Yes, you've sinned and messed things up, but I can transform you into a new creation."

- **The real God cared so much about you** that he took your sins upon himself.
- He doesn't hang your sins on your head, he took them on his own.

Let me encourage you to consider this God, because in shaking off the idea of God altogether—you don't really escape the guilt problem. You just transfer your captivity. **One of the best examples of this came from...**

- Playwright and atheist **Arthur Miller**, who wrote the famous *Death of a Salesman*, explained that he became an atheist in part because he was tired of feeling guilty. Even after his de-conversion however, his feelings of guilt remained, only now he had no way of redressing them. "**The bench was now empty,**" he explained, and so he began to look to audience approval for the validation he had once searched for in God.⁶
- We all have the need for someone to look at our lives and declare, "Not guilty!"
- If we **kick God out of the courtroom**, we'll replace him with some other judge. But no other judge has the same authority or ability to forgive.

I'm glad you got rid of guilt God. But you need the true God. One more...

Co-Exist God

This is a lot of times a **reaction to the guilt God.**

⁶ Miller narrates his struggle through the voice of a character named Quentin in his play *After the Fall*: I see now, there was a presumption. That one moved . . . on an upward path toward some elevation where—God knows what—I would be justified, or even condemned. A verdict anyway. I think now that my disaster really began when I looked up one day—and the bench was empty. No judge in sight. And all that remained was the endless argument with oneself—this pointless litigation of existence before an empty bench. Arthur Miller, "After the Fall," in *The Portable Arthur Miller* (Ed. Christopher Bigsby; New York: Penguin, 2003), 262.

This is the God who **accepts everyone** and just wants you to be sincere and try your best.

Three problems with CEG:

He just doesn't work.

- Your heart was designed for the true God. **When the iPhone first got released**, one of the things people didn't like is that he made it where you couldn't open the iPhone. But Jobs said that the iPhone was such an intricately and perfectly designed system that you couldn't just open it up and jam stuff into it that didn't belong.
- If a phone is like that, wouldn't the **human heart** be much more so?
- You were designed by God for the one, true God. St. Augustine... our hearts are restless.

2nd problem...

CEG never confronts us with our sin.

- He's just a reflection of our hearts and all he does is affirm us. **But there are parts of us that don't need to be affirmed?** Co-Exist God tells us to follow our heart. But not all parts of your heart should be followed.
- **We see this in previous cultures:** Say you have a young **Viking male** is walking down the street who has just had his honor insulted. His heart tells him to go and kill whoever shamed him because that's the only way we can restore his honor. But we say, "Well, don't listen to your heart because it's leading you astray."
- But we assume that **whatever our heart tells us** is right? **Why would we think that is true for us if it's not true for other cultures?**
- Co-Exist God is like a big blanket you curl up in and find yourself. Some parts of you don't need to be found. They need to stay lost.

Third problem...

Co-Exist God just doesn't exist. A figment of our imagination.

- Like **someone writing a bio...**
- He's a not a **build-a-bear God**. Burger King.
- John 14:6

Conclusion

Goosebumps God. Smooth-Sailing God. On-Demand God. Killjoy God. Anti-Science God. Gap God. Guilt God and Co-Exist God.

Some of you have walked away from one of these distortions of God, and I want to say again, "**Congrats on leaving them.**" They never existed. They are like Cupid, or Casper the Friendly Ghost—they are just figments of somebody's imagination.

I want to **invite you to consider the real God**, revealed to us by **Jesus**.

- John 14:6 / If you've seen the Father, you've seen Jesus
- **He's not the God of Goosebumps**, but the God whose promises are more certain the fleeting feelings
- **He's not Smooth-Sailing God** but a God who is greater than pain and using it for our good and his glory.
- **He's not On Demand God** but a loving Father we can trust in...
- **Not anti-science**, but the God who said PSALM 19:1
- **Etc.**

John 14:6—The core of Christian confession for 2K years has been that Jesus is who he says he is.

Are you ready to trust and follow this God? You have questions. So, do I. Are you ready to follow him, and know this God he claimed to reveal?

- He said your core problem was that sin interrupted your relationship... all other problems stemmed from that one.

This whole series has been about genuine faith in the true God.

Some of you had that faith coming in and it's been **confirmed**; others have found it during this time.

Like I told you, we want to **give you a chance to express that**, if you never have, by getting baptized...

I'll say what I said at the beginning:

- **Baptism is the public ceremony**, if you will, of deciding to follow Jesus. The **official statement** we make that we are going all-in with Jesus.
- **It's something you are supposed to do** after you accept Jesus as your Savior, and there are some of you who have yet to do that. Some of you say, "What's the big deal, it's just a ritual." Yes,
 - Just Durham/Wake/Orange tap water... you'll be dirtier when you come out than when you went in...
- But **it's a command** Jesus gives us... **it has important spiritual effects** in your life. God uses to solidify and mark your faith.
- Some of you are **brand new Christians** and you've never done it; others of you have been **Christians for a while** but simply never taken this step. Today is your day.
- Some of you were **baptized as a child**, or as a baby, before you really understood who Jesus was or made a personal decision to follow him. We want to invite you to ratify that decision your parents made by choosing to get baptized on your own.
- **Here's the question:** *Are you prepared to follow Jesus wherever he leads, and if so, are you willing to demonstrate that by obeying him in this area?*
 - **Someone will greet you, you'll go to a place outside where we have a small counseling area set up...** we'll answer any questions. And if you are ready, we'll do it today. We **can always delay**.
- **Again, you say, "But I didn't come prepared."** We are prepared for you. We have all you'll need—towels, modest black shorts and T-shirts, changing areas, hair product—we have it all.