



CELL NOTES

21st September 2020

WELCOME

D – I – Y this week.

WORSHIP

D – I – Y this week.

WORD

Listen to Exodus 34:10-16 & recall the sermon

1. When is it good for humans to be jealous? Why might God's jealousy (or passion) be good news for you?
2. When do you struggle with the demands the Lord makes on you? How might verses 10-11 give you hope in those situations?
3. 'An idol is when a *good* thing becomes a *god* thing' How do we value the precious things and people in our lives without letting them take God's place?

WITNESS

- **Answer this one!** A friend who's not a Christian happened to watch Online Worship this week. She heard those words of Jesus in Matthew 10: 'anyone who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me'. She says, "how's that different to a Muslim extremist who wears a bomb to kill others, because he's putting love for Allah above all else?. Isn't it unhealthy or dangerous to put God first in our lives, even above our nearest and dearest?" How would you answer that? Is there a difference, and if so, how?

For further study

As you heard the Bible reading, you might have been thinking, 'God's jealousy might be good news for his own people, but it doesn't sound very comforting for the Amorites, Canaanites & Co. who are being driven out of the land! How is that part of his plan?'

It's a great – and a big! – question, to which one of the most helpful answers is found in *The God I don't understand* by Chris Wright (Zondervan, 2008). There's also a helpful blog at the Bible Project by Andy Patton (<https://bibleproject.com/blog/why-did-god-command-the-invasion-of-canaan-in-the-book-of-joshua/>), but here's a few bits of the jigsaw:

1. To ask the question is a good instinct! The Bible clear that the Lord loves all that he has made. Each life is precious to him – which is partly why from the very start of the Bible, murder is seen as such a terrible thing.
2. From the very outset (see Genesis 12:3), Israel was chosen to be a blessing to the nations, not just to enjoy her knowledge of the Lord for herself. She was meant to be a light to the nations. We see little examples of that in the way sometimes foreigners become people of faith in the Old Testament (Rahab, Naaman, Ruth, the Ninevites in the book of Jonah), and in prophets like Isaiah who remind them to show the goodness of God in the world. The prophets hold out a vision of peace for all the world, centred on Israel's Messiah, finding true rest and universal blessing.
3. So no surprise that in Jesus we see a Prince of Peace, who begins to reach out beyond Israel, and sends his disciples out to the nations. He is One who fights not with force, but kindness. He loves – dies for – his enemies, and prays forgiveness on his murderers. This is the path for the people of God today. It is clear the Old Testament passages about fighting enemies are not the lasting will of God for his people and cannot be used by us to justify killing others.
4. All that said, Israel in those early days, for a limited time and for a limited purpose, was encouraged to use force – violence even – to remove the inhabitants of the Promised Land. There is some (if not a full) explanation of this in the Old Testament:
 - From the start, they were told that what they were doing was God's means of bringing justice and judgement on those nations for their sins (Genesis 15:16, Leviticus 18:24-25) and that Israel herself would be driven out by other nations, if she fell into the same ways (Leviticus 18:28). Of course, in time, she was.
 - There was nothing special about Israel herself, she was chosen by God as his instrument of justice, herself being sinful and unimpressive (Deuteronomy 7:1-8, 9:4-6).
 - God set strict limits on how warfare was to be waged, including offering enemies peace before any attack (Deuteronomy 20).
 - The sins of the Canaanites were particularly horrendous: violence and oppression, with appalling religious practices, including sexual promiscuity and child sacrifice (e.g. 2 Kings 16:3). This may explain the particular stress on not following their worship of idols (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). It's perhaps worth remembering that Israel had been liberated from Egypt, whose gods had been part of the system that kept them in slavery. Part of the Lord's concern about other gods is that they inevitably enslave their worshippers, whereas the Lord longs to liberate.
 - In this way, you could compare the actions of Israel to the liberation of Europe from the Nazi regime by the Allies. The Allies weren't perfect, but they were removing a specially wicked regime, and they did need to use force.