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SPRING 2019 NEWSLETTER

The Eccentric God

When you think of God, do you consider Him eccentric?

I know “eccentric” is not commonly found in the lists of God’s characteristics—alright, it is not on any of the lists—but by definition, I think He fits the description. Webster defines “eccentric” as deviating from the usual or accepted pattern.

I do realize Scripture declares Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8) and that James says there is no variation in God (1:17).

I recall that Psalm 55:19 states that God does not change. But these verses do not capture or speak to the essence of what it means to be an eccentric.

An eccentric person is out of the ordinary, unusual, different than we expect, or often than we accept. Eccentrics do not tolerate or fit prefabricated boxes. As a matter of fact, if you attempt to box them in, they kick at the sides until they are free of the limitation. Neither will they be defined by comparison. They are their own person.

Rather than attempt to conform an eccentric to our world, if we are courageous and noble minded, we step into their world, listen to their thoughts, and capture the essence of what makes them tick. Only then do we grasp the person.

God is eccentric! He is unusual. He will not be defined by what we consider acceptable. He is extravagant, wasteful, unpredictable, inventive. Extravagant in His grace, wasteful with His liberal overtures of love, and He clearly operates on His own timetable. He is unpredictable and often finds joy in crafting solutions to our concerns that are

conceived in His mind and way outside the boundaries of our best thinking.

I have spent many, many hours attempting to define God with lists of character qualities, to box Him in with His Word in order to predict His next move, to behave myself impeccably and in so doing predispose what He is honor-bound to do in response to my good behavior, just as Job did throughout his book. To no avail.

I have concluded: God operates outside the usual and deviates from the acceptable—that is, the plan I would have Him follow—with disarming frequency. It seems there is no other conclusion to be drawn than to enter His world and get to know Him on His terms. Job arrived at the same conclusion (ref. Job 42:1-6).

Rather than defining God as seems best to me, I am beholden to ask Him to tell me about Himself. Rather than imposing upon Him what I think seems good to me, I am remiss if I fail to ask Him for His perspective. Rather than tell Him what I consider acceptable, I need to hear His definition of acceptable.

As Voltaire said, “God created man in His own image and man returned the favor.” Oh, my! I do

not want a God that I have created. I do not want a God designed to meet the needs I am aware of in my life based upon my assessment of my needs. I do not want a God who is no bigger than my pint-size mind can conceive and my earthly perspective invents.

I want a God who is true to Himself, defined by no one, especially me. I want a God who



*Preston Gillham doing what he loves
best when not writing.*

determines my needs and meets them as He sees fit. I want a God who takes me to where He is rather than succumbing to where I am.

I have discovered that the more I attempt to figure God out only so I can place my expectations, assumptions, and manipulations upon Him, the more I am frustrated with the awareness that I have missed the mark and only captured the idea of God, not God Himself. But the more consistent I am in listening to Him tell me about Himself and describe His world, and the more responsive I am to His regular invitation to join Him in His place on the journey, the more I am able to say, "I know something of God and can vouch for who He is."

This is very important! If we are to be advocates on behalf of our Heavenly Father, then it stands to reason we must know Him, and know Him well. If this is not the case, if all we know of Him is from a theological list, or what we have heard, or what we

expect, or deem acceptable then we will render an inaccurate portrait of Him to those looking to us to provide an introduction to Him.

God will not let Himself be defined. He wants to be known!

It is not enough to know about God. No definition captures His essence fully. We must accept that He is extraordinary, even eccentric. He operates outside the norm and will not fit within the acceptable parameters we define for Him.

Rather than frustrate us, His eccentricities are an invitation to know Him for who He really is.

In my experience, God readily answers the prayer, "Father, tell me about yourself"—if only we will ask and listen.

Preston Gillham
www.PrestonGillham.com

*Preston Gillham is a committed follower of Jesus and spends his time writing, counseling, fly-fishing, consulting with leaders and executives, as a husband to Dianne and frequent speaker at The Hill.

Upcoming Events

Online Isaiah Course, beginning April 1, 2019—A suggestion was made during the recent Fellowship Retreat that we post a weekly Bible study online for folks to enjoy. We thought it was a great idea, and judging from the response on Facebook, others agree.

Beginning April 1st we will post a recording of Bob Warren teaching through Isaiah; adding another session each week until we have worked our way through the book of Isaiah. Those recordings and notes will remain available for 5-6 weeks in case you get behind in your study. You'll find the Isaiah recordings posted on the "Audio Teachings" tab of our website, lifeonthehill.org. We hope you can join us for the online Isaiah study.

Men's Retreat, April 26-28, 2019—Our annual Men's Retreat for fathers, their sons, and single men of all ages. Preston Gillham will be speaking along with others. Register online at lifeonthehill.org.

Summer Youth Leadership Camps, June 2-8 & July 7-13, 2019—Our annual summer camp for ages 13-18 is a week of intense Bible study, service projects, fun and fellowship. The application and more information are available at: lifeonthehill.org. Space is limited for each camp, so reserve your spot early.

Grace Conference/Romans Retreat, August, 2019—Details coming soon!

Sample from Isaiah

Since we will start our online Isaiah Course April 1st, we thought it appropriate to include an excerpt of Bob's Isaiah Commentary in this newsletter. At the completion of this course you will have a thorough understanding of the

prophet, his writing, and the era from which he prophesied. You will also receive a well-rounded introduction to the other writing prophets, including a healthy dose of Revelation. The Isaiah course is some of the best teaching that

Bob Warren did. We hope you enjoy it!

Isaiah 1

Isaiah 1:1 The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, concerning Judah and Jerusalem which he saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.

The name Isaiah means “Jehovah is salvation” or “the salvation of Jehovah.” Isaiah was the son of Amoz (1:1; 2:1; 13:1) and a prophet to Judah and Jerusalem.

Isaiah received a major portion of what he recorded through visions. He saw in his mind what God was revealing to him.

Four kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, ruled in the southern kingdom during Isaiah’s day.

King Uzziah (790-740 B.C.) is addressed in 2 Kings 14:21-15:8, and 2 Chronicles 26:1-23. He is referred to as Azariah in 2 Kings but is called Uzziah in 2 Chronicles. These passages allow us to conclude: While Uzziah was king of Judah, Jeroboam II was King of Israel. Together they controlled the same territory that King David and King Solomon had controlled years earlier—a very large segment of the land of Canaan. The economy boomed, and the people were very pleased with Uzziah’s leadership. He was a good king initially, seeking the Lord, fortifying the land, and defeating God’s enemies. However, Uzziah did not remove the high places. (Note: The high places were worship centers where the Jews set up a miniature holy place and holy of holies and unlawfully offered sacrifices that should have been offered in Jerusalem. Jehovah was worshipped (it was not idolatrous worship—2Chronicles 33:17), but it was worship that occurred in the wrong geographical location. Because the high places seemed to make the worship of Jehovah more convenient, it felt proper to allow the high places to remain. God’s word teaches otherwise (Deuteronomy 12:4-11).

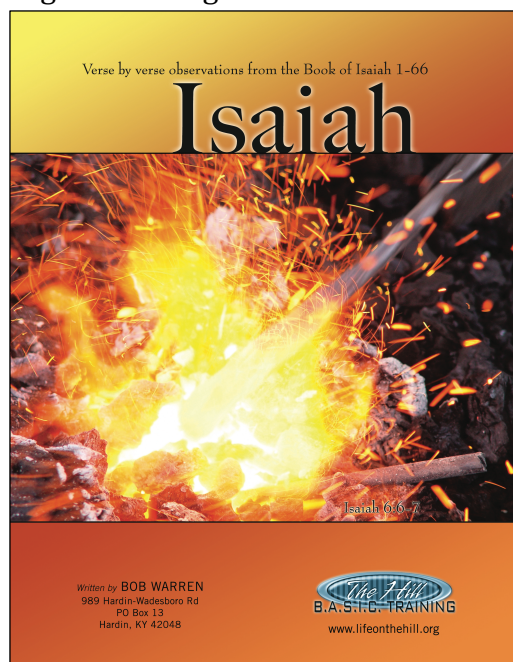
The Scriptures were written so we might filter out what feels right yet breaks God’s heart.) He later fell prey to pride and arrogance, even stooping so low as to attempt to burn incense on the altar of incense within the temple (a privilege granted only to the priests). As a result, God struck him with leprosy, and he later died (2Chronicles 26:19-21).

King Jotham (750 to 731 B.C.) is addressed in 2 Kings 15:7, 32-38, 2 Chronicles 26:23, and 27:1-9. From these passages we gather: Jotham, Uzziah’s son, “did what was right in the sight of the Lord as his father...had done”; only he, like his father, did not remove the high places. He had success against his enemies and “built cities in the hill country of Judah” as well as “fortresses and towers on the wooded hills.”

King Ahaz (735-715 B.C.) is addressed in 2Kings 16:1-20, 17:1, and 2Chronicles 28:1-27. He, of the four kings who ruled during Isaiah’s ministry, was the worst. Based on 2Chronicles 28:2-4, “he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel” (worship of the golden calf), instituted Baal worship, and did not remove the high places (worship of Jehovah in the wrong place).

During Ahaz’s reign the king of Israel (Pekah) and the king of Aram (Rezin), Aram being Syria, came against Judah for the purpose of doing away with the house (dynasty) of David

(look to notes associated with Isaiah 7:6). God intervened due to His promise concerning the perpetual nature of the Davidic throne (2Samuel 7:8-16; 1Chronicles 17:10-14). This backdrop initiated Isaiah’s prophecy relating to the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14). However, Ahaz, instead of trusting Jehovah for deliverance from Pekah and Rezin, aligned himself with the Assyrians. After Assyria overthrew the Syrian capital of Damascus, Ahaz ordered the high priest in Jerusalem to build a replica of the altar he had seen in Damascus. He stationed it inside King Solomon’s temple, being so bold (and out of



The Isaiah Commentary written by Bob Warren

touch with reality) as to have the priest to offer the burnt offering and... meal offering upon it (2Kings 16:15). Molech worship, where children were offered up in fire (Jeremiah 32:35), had received a great boost from Ahaz, who, like King Ahab of Israel, was a supporter of foreign deities (2Kings 16:12-13; 2Chronicles 28:1-4). In the end he even ordered the doors of the temple shut (2Chronicles 28:24). When the dust settled, Ahaz found himself in subjection to the Assyrians, a domination that continued into King Hezekiah's reign.

King Hezekiah (715-686) is addressed in 2Kings 16:20, 18:1-20:21, and 2Chronicles 29:1-32:33. Hezekiah was a godly king and is described by God as the greatest king to rule over God's people, even greater than David (2Kings 18:5). He removed the high places, something that even Uzziah and Jotham failed to do, and eliminated the evil practices that had been introduced to the southern kingdom through his father Ahaz. He cleansed the temple of idolatry and reinstated the temple service according to God's law. He even invited the Jews living in the northern kingdom (who lived in territories not destroyed by the Assyrians) to come to Jerusalem to worship.

*The *Isaiah Commentary* is available on the "Books & CDs" tab from our website: lifeonthehill.org.

Friends of The Hill

David and Carol Wright have been faithful supporters of The Hill from almost the beginning. Carol started attending Bible studies in the early 80's when the only building on the property was the cabin. The Wrights have since been through most every course Bob taught here at The Hill. The Romans course was the most life-changing for both of them. Carol



said of her first time through, "Ok, I'm not getting this, but the second time, wow!"

For David and Carol, The Hill is a place to be fed spiritually and go deeper with the Lord. In fact, their extended family also makes The Hill a frequent destination. Carol and their daughter Tabitha Dean help in the kitchen during summer camps. Tabitha attended some of the first camps held at The Hill and her son, Morgan, is now a second-generation summer camper. Son-in-law Terry Dean was a friend of Bob's and joins them for retreats at The Hill.

David and Carol reside in Paducah, KY.

Biblical Discipleship

Around 1993, Bob penned a little known course called

Biblical Discipleship. After a couple of years out of print, it has recently been updated and made available again. Bob introduces the course this way:

"Biblical Discipleship is a 19-week small group discipleship course

for those who desire intimacy with Jesus Christ—those who want to know Him as their life (Philippians 3:10; Colossians 3:4). The goal is not to learn the Bible as an end in itself, or how to pray. The goal is Him—not to know about Him, but to know Him."

**Biblical Discipleship* is available on the "Books & CDs" tab from our website: lifeonthehill.org.

This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (John 17:3)

Kim

