

**[1]**  
***Living in HisStory:Revealing the True Wonder of Who God is***  
***God's Awesome Presence***  
**2 Samuel 6; John 1:1-18; Ephesians 3:14-21**  
**January 28, 2018, Jeff Germo**

I've chosen to call this sermon, "God's Awesome Presence." Actually, that's not true. Callista chose to call it "God's Awesome Presence." I was going to call it "The Awesome Presence of God," but I sent the title to her and she came back with, "Just three words, please," and gave me this title instead. "God's Awesome Presence." I like it.

The word, "awesome" has softened over the years. It used to be a very weighty word. It used to mean, fearsome, or dreaded. "Awesome" used to be a word that evoked fear. Now, "awesome" is synonymous with, "That's so cool, dude". "That's an awesome new skateboard you got, dude." The word "awesome" lost its power and dread.

In the Old Testament, the Jews had a fearful reverence for God and his name. In fact, at some point in history, (I'm not sure when) they even ceased to utter his name, "Yahweh." Even today, Orthodox Jews will not say or write the name of God. They substitute it instead for *Hashem*, meaning, "The Name," or *hakadosh baruch hu*, meaning "The Holy One, Blessed Be He". God's transcendent nature is emphasized. "Transcendence" means "above everything" or "other worldly." It has the nuance of being unreachable —way out there and above all else — which God is, of course.

God is completely different than any created being. There are some traits God has that he did not pass on to human beings who he made in his image. These are just some of his transcendent qualities.

**[2]**

God is:

1. **Omnipotent** — All powerful — We are not.
2. **Omnipresent** — Everywhere, not limited to time or space — We are not.
3. **Omniscient** — All-knowing — We are not.
4. **Immutable** — Unchangeable — We are not.
5. **Infinite** — No beginning or end — We are not.
6. **Sovereign** — In complete control of everything — We are not.
7. **Holy** — Completely good and incorruptible — We are not.

Those are just some of God's transcendent attributes. He is all of those things and more. We are none of those things. These things differentiate us from God.

Read through the Old Testament and you will very quickly see this very fearful transcendent picture of God, on one hand. And on the other hand, and equally true, you see a God who is completely loving, and continually seeking relationship with his people.

Remember when Moses and the Israelites were at Mount Sinai and Moses had been up the mountain getting the law from God. He came down the mountain to find all the people worshipping a golden calf they had formed. In anger Moses threw down the stone tablets that had the 10 Commandments inscribed on them and broke them to pieces.

He went back up the mountain to meet with God again to re-inscribe the tablets. God told Moses that nobody was to go near the mountain or they would die. They would not be able to stand being near God and his holiness. God is completely, and in the true sense of the word, “awesome,” holy. Here are a few Scriptures using the word “awesome” in reference to the character of God.

[3]

**Genesis 28:17 (NLT)**

***17 But he was also afraid and said, “What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”***

This was after Jacob stole Esau’s blessing and his mother sent him on a journey to find himself a wife. He laid down to sleep at night with his head resting on a rock for a pillow. He had a vision of a staircase going up to heaven with angels of God ascending and descending and at the top of the stairs stood the Lord. The Lord reaffirmed the promise he had given to his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham, that he would make his name great and multiply his descendants so they would be too numerous to count and they would be used to bless every nation on the earth. Then he woke up and uttered these words, ***“What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!”***

He wasn’t like, “Cool place man! We should build a skateboard park here.” He was terrified. He had just experienced the awesome, fearful presence of God. It struck dread into the very core of his being.

Here are a few more awesome verses.

[4]

**Psalm 66:3 (NLT)**

***3 Say to God, “How awesome are your deeds! Your enemies cringe before your mighty power.***

[5]

**Psalm 99:3 (NLT)**

***3 Let them praise your great and awesome name. Your name is holy!***

[6]

**Exodus 15:11 (NLT)**

***11 “Who is like you among the gods, O Lord— glorious in holiness, awesome in splendor, performing great wonders?***

[7]

**Exodus 16:10 (NLT)**

***10 And as Aaron spoke to the whole community of Israel, they looked out toward the wilderness. There they could see the awesome glory of the Lord in the cloud.***

[8]

**Exodus 34:10 (NLT)**

***10 The Lord replied, “Listen, I am making a covenant with you in the presence of all your people. I will perform miracles that have never been performed anywhere in all the earth or in any nation. And all the people around you will see the power of the Lord—the awesome power I will display for you.***

[9]

Deuteronomy 5:25 (NLT)

*<sup>25</sup> But now, why should we risk death again? If the Lord our God speaks to us again, we will certainly die and be consumed by this awesome fire.*

[10]

Deuteronomy 7:21 (NLT)

*<sup>21</sup> “No, do not be afraid of those nations, for the Lord your God is among you, and he is a great and awesome God.*

[11]

Deuteronomy 10:17 (NLT)

*<sup>17</sup> “For the Lord your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords. He is the great God, the mighty and awesome God, who shows no partiality and cannot be bribed.*

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Job 13:21 (NLT)

*<sup>21</sup> Remove your heavy hand from me, and don’t terrify me with your awesome presence.*

[13]

Psalms 47:2 (NLT)

*<sup>2</sup> For the Lord Most High is awesome. He is the great King of all the earth.*

[14]

Psalms 77:14 (NLT)

*<sup>14</sup> You are the God of great wonders! You demonstrate your awesome power among the nations.*

[15]

Psalms 99:3 (NLT)

*<sup>3</sup> Let them praise your great and awesome name. Your name is holy!*

[16]

Isaiah 64:3 (NLT)

*<sup>3</sup> When you came down long ago, you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked!*

[17]

Ezekiel 20:33 (NLT)

*<sup>33</sup> As surely as I live, says the Sovereign Lord, I will rule over you with an iron fist in great anger and with awesome power.*

[18]

Joel 2:11 (NLT)

*<sup>11</sup> The Lord is at the head of the column. He leads them with a shout. This is his mighty army, and they follow his orders. The day of the Lord is an awesome, terrible thing. Who can possibly survive?*

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## **Zephaniah 1:7 (NLT)**

***<sup>7</sup> Stand in silence in the presence of the Sovereign Lord, for the awesome day of the Lord's judgment is near. The Lord has prepared his people for a great slaughter and has chosen their executioners.***

Those were all in the Old Testament. This next one is from the New Testament, but looks back to when Moses and the Israelites were at Mount Sinai and experienced God's terrifying presence.

**[20]**

## **Hebrews 12:19 (NLT)**

***<sup>19</sup> For they heard an awesome trumpet blast and a voice so terrible that they begged God to stop speaking.***

The writer of Hebrews continues speaking to how we, since Christ, should approach God.

**[21]**

## **Hebrews 12:28–29 (NLT)**

***<sup>28</sup> Since we are receiving a Kingdom that is unshakable, let us be thankful and please God by worshiping him with holy fear and awe. <sup>29</sup> For our God is a devouring fire.***

I fear we have made God far too safe in our day. We have created a God, in our own minds, who is palatable for us. We've made him to be like a fluffy toy that we use to comfort ourselves when we are feeling discouraged, or a Santa Clause when we want a new toy. God is awesome in his holiness. He is a God who is to be feared.

In C.S. Lewis' book, *Chronicles of Narnia*, Lucy and Susan were asking Mr. and Mrs. Beaver about Aslan, who allegorically represents Christ in the book. They ask if he is a man. Mr. and Mrs. Beaver break the news to them that Aslan is actually a lion.

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***"Ooh," said Susan, "I thought he was a man. Is he quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion." "That you will, dearie," said Mrs. Beaver.***

**[23]**

***"And make no mistake, if there's anyone who can appear before Aslan without their knees knocking, they're either braver than most or else just silly." "Then he isn't safe?" said Lucy.***

**[24]**

***"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. "Don't you hear what Mrs. Beaver tells you? Who said anything about safe? Of course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the king, I tell you!"***

God is awesome and all-powerful and eternal and fearful. But, he is much much more than that. He is also good, and completely loving, and continually pursuing relationship with his people. Those two amazing realities should cause us to fall on our faces in worship. That is what happened to Moses on the Mountain when these two attributes of God collided in front of him.

**[25]**

## **Exodus 34:5–8 (NLT)**

***<sup>5</sup> Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. <sup>6</sup> The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.***

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***<sup>7</sup> I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected— even children in the third and fourth generations.” <sup>8</sup> Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped.***

So, God is transcendent, but he is also immanent, meaning “close.” Remember, he moved into our neighbourhood, we learn in John 1:14. He became like us. We celebrate his presence with us at Christmas time. God became man so we could get to know him, to bring us back into relationship with himself. That is the kind of God we serve, worship, and love. We mustn’t forget either side. Both are completely true. He is completely awesome and fearful and all-powerful, but because of Jesus he invites us into his presence.

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I have said all that by way of introduction because we are going to read a passage of Scripture in 2 Samuel 6 that has some things in it that are hard for us to comprehend if we just think that God is a nice warm fluffy God whose only attribute is ‘love.’ He is that, more than we know, but he is much more. He is awesome, and fearful, and holy, and just, and loving and good, all at the same time.

This morning we are going to take a look at 2 Samuel 6. There are a whole lot of events in this passage that could easily distract us from the main point, so I am going to try my best not to let that happen.

While Saul was king of Israel the Philistines had captured the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence and power of God and was crucial to Israel’s worship of Yahweh, the one true God of the universe.

Remember, while the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, after they had been freed from slavery in Egypt, God, through Moses, instructed them to build the tabernacle, and all the articles of worship, including the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup>

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Let’s take a look at a model of the tabernacle.

While the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, God gave Moses some very meticulously detailed plans for the tabernacle, which was to be a temporary dwelling place for God. The Holy Spirit had not been sent yet. God chose to dwell temporarily in the tabernacle. The Israelites would pack it up and all the articles of worship and carry them along whenever they would move camp.

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The priests would carry the Ark in front. There was a prescribed way God told them to carry it. He was very particular in his instructions on how it was to be built and how it was to be carried. The dimensions of the Ark were just under four feet long by about 28 inches wide by 28 inches high. The poles for carrying the ark were to be 15 feet long.

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**Exodus 25:13–14 (NLT)**

***<sup>13</sup> Make poles from acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. <sup>14</sup> Insert the poles into the rings at the sides of the Ark to carry it.***

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<sup>1</sup> <https://growinggodlygenerations.com/2013/05/03/the-tabernacle-video-pictures/>  
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## Numbers 4:15 (NLT)

***15 The camp will be ready to move when Aaron and his sons have finished covering the sanctuary and all the sacred articles. The Kohathites will come and carry these things to the next destination. But they must not touch the sacred objects, or they will die. So these are the things from the Tabernacle that the Kohathites must carry.***

**[32]**

When Saul was king, in 1 Samuel 5, the Philistines captured the Ark. They had that classic view of God that many of us sometimes suffer from. They thought that if they captured the Ark, they would have God in a box and would automatically have victory. We sometimes do the same thing, don't we? It didn't take very long for the Philistines to find out that God cannot be contained or manipulated, like a genie in a bottle.

The presence of God destroyed many of them. In 1 Samuel 7, the Philistines fearfully returned the Ark and left it in Kiriath-jearim (also called Baalah of Judah) in Israel. It sat there for twenty years. Israel felt like the Lord had abandoned them. There is, as always, a whole bunch of drama that I am leaving out, so make sure you read the back story.

Finally, in 2 Samuel 6 David, with great pomp and celebration, decided to move the Ark of God to Jerusalem, but failed to do it in the way God had prescribed. (1 Chronicles 13 is the parallel account.)

**[33]**

## 2 Samuel 6 (NLT)

***1 Then David again gathered all the elite troops in Israel, 30,000 in all. 2 He led them to Baalah of Judah [1 Chronicles 13 tells us that Baalah of Judah was also called Kiriath-jearim] to bring back the Ark of God, which bears the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies, who is enthroned between the cherubim.***

**[34]**

***3 They placed the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it from Abinadab's house, which was on a hill.***

Remember, the way God very carefully prescribed for them to handle the Ark was to put the poles through the rings and have the priests carry it. Nobody was to touch it or they would die. They were not to haul it on a cart.

***Uzzah and Ahio, Abinadab's sons, were guiding the cart 4 that carried the Ark of God. Ahio walked in front of the Ark.***

**[35]**

***5 David and all the people of Israel were celebrating before the Lord, singing songs and playing all kinds of musical instruments—lyres, harps, tambourines, castanets, and cymbals.***

Picture the scene in your mind. This was a celebration of epic proportions. The Ark was finally coming to Jerusalem after being gone for twenty years. David had organized a huge worship team with all kinds of musicians leading the Ark back to Jerusalem. It was noisy and jubilant. Everyone was ecstatic.

***6 But when they arrived at the threshing floor of Nacon, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out his hand and steadied the Ark of God. 7 Then the Lord's anger was aroused***

***against Uzzah, and God struck him dead because of this. So Uzzah died right there beside the Ark of God.***

This is the part that we can't understand. It doesn't make sense to us if we see God as a one dimensional God whose only attribute is love, and whose main purpose is to grant us our every wish. God is completely loving, but he is also just, and because he is holy and perfect, because he is just, because he is good, because he cannot contravene his character, he has to follow through on what he said he would do. And what he said was that anyone who touched the Ark would die. I know this is hard to understand. David didn't understand it either.

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***<sup>8</sup> David was angry because the Lord's anger had burst out against Uzzah. He named that place Perez-uzzah (which means "to burst out against Uzzah"), as it is still called today. <sup>9</sup> David was now afraid of the Lord, and he asked, "How can I ever bring the Ark of the Lord back into my care?"***

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***<sup>10</sup> So David decided not to move the Ark of the Lord into the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-edom of Gath. <sup>11</sup> The Ark of the Lord remained there in Obed-edom's house for three months, and the Lord blessed Obed-edom and his entire household.***

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***<sup>12</sup> Then King David was told, "The Lord has blessed Obed-edom's household and everything he has because of the Ark of God." So David went there and brought the Ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the City of David with a great celebration.***

This time they did it the way God had prescribed. The poles were fed through the loops attached to the side of the Ark and the priests carried it on their shoulders.

**[39]**

***<sup>13</sup> After the men who were carrying the Ark of the Lord had gone six steps, David sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. <sup>14</sup> And David danced before the Lord with all his might, wearing a priestly garment. <sup>15</sup> So David and all the people of Israel brought up the Ark of the Lord with shouts of joy and the blowing of rams' horns.***

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***<sup>16</sup> But as the Ark of the Lord entered the City of David, Michal, the daughter of Saul, looked down from her window. When she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she was filled with contempt for him. <sup>17</sup> They brought the Ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the special tent David had prepared for it. And David sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord.***

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***<sup>18</sup> When he had finished his sacrifices, David blessed the people in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies. <sup>19</sup> Then he gave to every Israelite man and woman in the crowd a loaf of bread, a cake of dates, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people returned to their homes.***

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***<sup>20</sup> When David returned home to bless his own family, Michal, the daughter of Saul, came out to meet him. She said in disgust, "How distinguished the king of Israel looked today, shamelessly exposing himself to the servant girls like any vulgar person might do!"***

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***<sup>21</sup> David retorted to Michal, "I was dancing before the Lord, who chose me above your father and all his family! He appointed me as the leader of Israel, the people of the Lord, so I celebrate before the Lord. <sup>22</sup> Yes, and I am willing to look even more foolish than this, even to be humiliated in my own eyes! But those servant girls you mentioned will indeed think I am***

***distinguished!”<sup>23</sup> So Michal, the daughter of Saul, remained childless throughout her entire life.***

There is a lot going on in this text. I wrestled with this passage all week long trying to figure out how to best deal with it.

**[44]**

Whenever you read a Scripture text it's important to ascertain what the main thread or the big idea is. There is a lot of drama happening here. David's unsuccessful attempt to bring the Ark to Jerusalem. Uzzah getting killed by the Presence of God when he accidentally touched the Ark. David dancing like a maniac in front of the Ark while the musicians are playing their instruments. His wife, Michal, watching him disdainfully from the window and accusing him of dancing for the young ladies. And David correcting her, saying that he was actually dancing before the Lord and he is okay looking foolish because he has an Audience of One.

That's a lot of drama in one chapter. The main thread that weaves its way through the chapter though, is the Ark of the Covenant which represents the awesome power and presence of God. Let's bring this home.

In the Old Testament, while the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, they packed up the tabernacle and moved it around with them, with the Ark of the Covenant leading the way, which represented the presence and power of God. God, in some strange way, localized his presence. He dwelt temporarily in the tabernacle. With the advent of Jesus things changed. Let's wrap this up by looking at the New Testament.

**[45]**

**John 1:1–18 (NLT)**

***<sup>1</sup> In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He existed in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. <sup>4</sup> The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.***

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***<sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. <sup>6</sup> God sent a man, John the Baptist, <sup>7</sup> to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. <sup>8</sup> John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light. <sup>9</sup> The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He came into the very world he created, but the world didn't recognize him.***

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***<sup>11</sup> He came to his own people, and even they rejected him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. <sup>13</sup> They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.***

**[48]**

***<sup>14</sup> So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. <sup>15</sup> John testified about him when he shouted to the crowds, "This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'Someone is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' "***

The Greek word for "made his home among us" means to dwell. It's the same meaning as "tabernacle". God dwelt in the tabernacle. Jesus made his dwelling among us. He tabernacled on the



earth in bodily form, temporarily, and then the Holy Spirit came. Now, the Bible says that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. We have the permanent presence of the Spirit with us now.

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***16 From his abundance we have all received one gracious blessing after another. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. But the unique One, who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us.***

Here is the part that is going to blow your mind and make you want to fall on your face and worship Jesus.

***17 For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.***

Remember when Moses was on Mount Sinai in the passage we looked at earlier? How did God describe himself? Let's look at it again.

[50]

**Exodus 34:5–8 (NLT)**

***5 Then the Lord came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh. 6 The Lord passed in front of Moses, calling out, "Yahweh! The Lord! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.***

Is that not the most amazing thing you have ever seen? God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus tabernacling with us.

If you have asked God to forgive you based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is living in you. He is tabernacling in you. You are his temple. I'm going to close by reading from Ephesians 3. Pay careful attention to this and then let's worship Jesus together.

[51]

**Ephesians 3:14–21 (NLT)**

***14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.***

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***17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.***

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***19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God. 20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.***

Let's worship Jesus together, and like David, don't worry about looking foolish. We worship to an Audience of One, Jesus, our Lord and Creator of the heavens and earth.



***Living in HisStory: Revealing the True Wonder of Who God Is***  
***God's Awesome Presence***  
**2 Samuel 6; John 1:1-18; Ephesians 3:14-21**  
**Week of January 28, 2018**

**Objective of this study:**

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

1. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
2. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
3. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read **Psalm 66:1-6** meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you. **Did anything “jump out at you”?**

**Welcome (5 minutes)**

What is the most awesome thing you've ever seen?

[It's really important when doing this study that we each think about ourselves specifically and ways we need to grow, not how Christians in general need to grow. Do the hard work of letting the Holy Spirit speak to *your* heart.]

**Word/Work (60-90 minutes)**

1. What stood out from the sermon? Did anything surprise you, or frighten you? How has your view of God expanded?
2. Divide up and read some of these awesome Scriptures: Exodus 15:11; 16:10; 34:10; Deuteronomy 5:25; 7:21; 10:17; Joel 2:11; Zephaniah 1:7; Psalm 47:2; 66:3; 99:3; Hebrews 12:19; 28-29.
3. Skim quickly through Exodus 25-27 and notice the detail in God's instructions.
4. Read 2 Samuel 6.
  1. Find ways in this chapter that God's awesome presence and power is the overarching theme.
5. Read John 1:1-18 and Exodus 34:5-8.
  1. How do you see Jesus foreshadowed in the Old Testament passages we looked at?
  2. And how do you see the Old Testament passages fulfilled in Jesus?

**Sermon quote:** “God is awesome and all-powerful and eternal and fearful. But, he is much much more than that. He is also good, and completely loving, and continually pursuing relationship with his people. Those two amazing realities should cause us to fall on our faces in worship.”

6. Have someone read Ephesians 3:14-21 while everyone else closes their eyes.
7. How would you like to respond to all of this?

## **Prayer**

1. Spend some time in prayer. Start by worshipping God for who he is and what he has done. Focus on being grateful. Pray about the things you discussed in the study.
2. Here are some things you can pray about for the church:
  - A. Praise God that he met all our needs financially last year.
  - B. That, as a church, we would actively and purposefully engage in the mission of Jesus in Campbell River.
  - C. Our church board and staff as they lead us to live out the mission of Jesus
  - D. River Kids ministry as they reach out to kids in our community.
  - E. **Our missionary of the month:** Aaron and Julie Gole at Camp Homewood
  - F. **Our missionary of the week:** Glenn & Lorrain Bueckert - YWAM
  - G. **Local CR church:** Black Creek Community Church - Pastors Barry and Peter