

Dealing with Fear and Wrong Perceptions of God

Why is it that some of us can read all the wonderful promises in the Bible, but somehow they don't seem real to us, or we don't think we are worthy of God answering our prayers? We can say we love and trust God, but when we begin to go through difficult circumstances, and times of testing and trials, all of our faith seems to go out the window! If the promises of God's word are seeming to you like lifeless words printed on paper, then maybe the problem is with your perception of God, not with the promises themselves. There are a number of areas where we can see God in a wrong light, or wrong perspective, and thus experience fear:

1.) FEAR of DEATH and the JUDGMENT

There is a good kind of fear to have toward God, and the Bible speaks of that as "the fear of the Lord." The meaning of "fear the Lord" in this context is a reverential awe and respect for God. But there is also the idea of **fearing His judgment on our sin**. You hardly ever see the expression "fear the Lord" used in the New Testament (although the idea of reverence for God is still there), because as believers under the New Covenant, our judgment (and thus the "fear") is taken away by Christ on the cross (II Cor. 5:21, I Peter 2:24). In I John 4:17 it says, **"that we may have boldness in the day of judgment" - NO FEAR!** because our sins were taken away at the cross. Also, it says "as He is, so are we in this world," which means God sees us as righteous and perfect as Jesus.

- **I John 4:17-18** "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because **as He is, so are we in this world. There is no FEAR in love**; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment (judgment, punishment). But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

C. H. Spurgeon said, "Jesus Himself has promised, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age' (Matt. 28:20). **Are you afraid to die? Does the grave alarm you?** Do not fear, for you cannot die. "Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.....For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ all shall be made alive**" (1Cor. 15:20, 22). Oh, the comfort of the gospel! Allow me to say this: if your trust is in Jesus, there is nothing in the Bible to make you afraid. Nothing in the Bible, did I say? **There is nothing in heaven, nothing on earth, and nothing in hell to make you fear, if your TRUST is in Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "Because I live, you will live also.** At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:19-20)."

- **John 11:21-26** "Then Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to Him, **"I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.**" Jesus said to her, **"I AM the RESURRECTION and the LIFE.** He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And **whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.** Do you believe this?"

2.) FEAR of PUNISHMENT from GOD

Many people have grown up believing that God was out to get them for any wrongs they did, and, if they committed big or bad enough sins, they might even end up in hell. This may come from someone who had a profound impact on your early life, such as a parent who was always critical or abusive, or it may come from the church or religious group you grew up in. You may unconsciously project these feelings about the abusive parent onto God, the Heavenly Father,

and you end up with a distorted picture of God. It is true that God is against all sin and wrongdoing, not because He's out to zap you, but because **He is truly a loving Father who wants to protect you from hurting yourself and others**--and to save you from the ultimate consequences of sin, which is eternal separation from God, the author of all love and life. The fact is that no matter what you have ever done or have failed to do, God loves you with an everlasting, unconditional love. But He does want you to come to him for forgiveness and to help you live a wholesome, meaningful, and loving life. Do you think you may have grown up with some of these wrong ideas about God, such as **an OVER EMPHASIS on God's judgment of sin**, rather than on **His LOVE and COMPASSION** for the sinner who repents?

God is your Loving Heavenly Father, and He REALLY DOES want to supply your needs, and He DOES have your best interests in mind. Even when He allows trials and tests to come into your life, it is always for your good. Even when He must discipline you because of disobedience and sin in your life, it is for your good, and He does it because He loves you.

- **Proverbs 3:11-12** "My son, do not despise the chastening (discipline) of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for **whom the Lord LOVES He corrects**, just as a father the son in whom he delights."
- **II Corinthians 1:3** "Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies**, and the **God of all COMFORT**."
- **Philippians 4:19** "But my God shall SUPPLY ALL your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
- **Jeremiah 29:11** "'For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans for welfare (your good) and not for calamity, to give you a future and a hope.'"
- **Romans 8:28** "And we know that **ALL things WORK together for GOOD** to those who **LOVE GOD**, to those who are the CALLED according to His purpose."
- **Psalms 84:11** "For the Lord God is a sun and shield, the Lord will give grace and glory: NO GOOD THING will He WITHHOLD from them that walk uprightly (obediently)."
- **Matthew 7:11** "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much MORE will **your Father who is in heaven give GOOD things** to those who ask Him!"

3.) FEAR of this LIFE, of CIRCUMSTANCES not being UNDER YOUR CONTROL

Is it really possible to live without fear, worry and anxiety in today's world? God's word tells us that it not only is possible, but we are commanded to "be not afraid" and to "not be anxious for anything." The Lord is our Shepherd, and He will protect us, His flock. However, you can't obey the commands to "fear not" and "be anxious for nothing" unless you really trust God. You must trust that He won't make a mistake, that He has your best interest at heart, that He knows the future outcome of all the events that are happening, and that He has the ability to work everything out for your good. **FEAR is the opposite of FAITH**, so how do you increase your faith in God and His ability to protect and take care of you? God's word says that **our faith is increased as we read and take in His word**. Romans 10:17, "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Also, **get to know your Heavenly Father by spending "quality time" with Him**. You can't trust someone you don't know very well, so get to know the Lord in a deeper, closer way through prayer and just talking to Him. Read the Bible as a way to get to know more about your precious Lord, rather than just racing through to see how many chapters a day you can read.

- **Luke 12:30-32** "For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and **your Father knows that you have need of these things**. But rather seek the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added to you. **Fear not, little flock**; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."
- **Psalms 27:1** "The Lord is my light and my salvation; **whom shall I fear?** The Lord is the strength of my life; **of whom shall I be afraid?**"

- **Psalm 23:1-6** "The Lord is my shepherd.....even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I will fear no evil; for You are with me**, Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...."
- **Matthew 6:31-33** "Therefore, DO NOT WORRY, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles (unbelievers) seek. **But your Heavenly Father knows that you need these things**. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to (provided for) you."
- **Philippians 4:6-7** "Do not be ANXIOUS for anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with THANKSGIVING, **let your REQUESTS be made known to God**. And the PEACE of GOD, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- **Matthew 14:27** "....Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'Take courage, **it is I; do NOT be AFRAID.**'"

4.) FEAR that GOD is not TRUSTWORTHY, that He WON'T come through for YOU

Because of abandonment issues in your past, or because of a parent or parents that you could never rely on, you may have thought of God in the same way. **You may be afraid to really SURRENDER your life to Him and trust Him**, because no one else in your life was ever trustworthy - they all let you down. However, the exact opposite is true about God. Psalm 27:10 says, **"If my father and mother forsake (abandon) me, then the Lord will take me up."** Are you AFRAID of giving up control of your life to God, and AFRAID to turn your life over to God because of wrong ideas and beliefs about Him? The answer to false beliefs about God comes, of course, from His word, but that may not be enough if you are very wounded from the past. You need to **imagine God the Father as the most perfect father you never had, but ALWAYS WANTED**, and picture yourself running to Him, and crawling up in His lap. **Because He is the PERFECT Father**, He will never tell you He is too busy, or that He would rather have one of His other children instead of you. He will never abuse you or treat you in any inappropriate way. Think of God the Father as the most perfect father you can imagine, and spend time with Him, just getting to know Him.

Others may fear because they feel unworthy of God's love, just as they felt unworthy and unloved as a child, because of parents and family members who did not model God's kind of love to them. God loves you, but **you must learn to see yourself as God sees you**, which means you must learn and **understand WHO you are in Christ Jesus**. There is no short cut to this understanding, because it comes as you renew your mind with the word of God (Romans 12:1-2). Do you sometimes feel UNWORTHY of God's love and power? Do you feel **He would not use His power on YOUR behalf**, or that He is only waiting to punish you? If you feel unworthy or you are angry with God because of the way He created you, you must realize that "God don't make no junk!" He allowed certain things to happen in the way you were formed and made, and you can **allow God to use you for His glory** if you truly SURRENDER and SUBMIT your life to Him. **God has a plan and purpose for your life**, but it will never be fulfilled if you wallow in self-pity or rebel in anger.

- **Psalm 86:5 & 15** "For **You, Lord, are GOOD**, and **ready to FORGIVE**; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon You." **"You, O Lord, are a God FULL of COMPASSION**, and GRACIOUS, long-suffering (patient), and plenteous in MERCY and truth."
- **Hebrews 13:5-6** "...He Himself has said, '**I will NEVER leave you, nor FORSAKE you**', so that we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my HELPER, and **I will NOT FEAR.....**'"
- **I Peter 5:5-7** "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **casting ALL your care (worry, anxiety, FEAR) upon Him, because He CARES for you.**"

- **Psalm 34:4-6** "I sought the Lord and **He heard me, and delivered me from all my FEARS**. They looked unto Him, and were lightened; and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."
- **John 10:2-8** "But He that enters in by the door is **the Shepherd of the sheep**. To Him the porter opens; and the sheep hear His voice; and **He calls His own sheep by name**, and leads them out..... He goes before them, and the sheep follow Him; for they know His voice. And a stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers."

IN SUMMARY: Let me repeat something very important: there is no short cut to having a correct understanding of who God is, and what He is like, because it only comes **as you RENEW your MIND with the WORD of God** (Romans 12:1-2). This takes time and commitment on your part. It took a lot of years for the misinformation you collected to become lodged in your brain, so it will take a concerted effort on your part to **REPLACE that old, corrupted picture of God in your mind** with the TRUTH from His word. It's like re-programming a computer, one program at a time. Every time you read the Bible, God's word, think of it as a love letter from God, sent to you in order to tell you how to have a good relationship with Him. Many of us want instant answers to the problems in our lives - problems of doubt, temptation, satanic attack, conflict in families, friendships and churches which are falling apart, and so on. We like to have something outward to DO, so we look to the practical instructions of God's Word. **We want a quick fix**, a rule or instruction which we can apply like a Band-Aid to make things better, but the Band-Aid approach to daily living doesn't work. Because when you don't understand the truth pertaining to your position in Christ, you have no ground for success in the practical arena. When your basic belief system about God and yourself is shaky, your day-to-day behavior system will be shaky. But when your belief system is intact and your relationship with God is based on truth, you'll have very little trouble working out the practical aspects of daily Christianity. Show me someone who knows who they are in Christ and who is filled with the Holy Spirit, and I will show you someone who will instinctively live according to the word of God. It will be the "natural" thing to do.

One more thing - our relationship with Jesus Christ needs to be more than just a "correct belief system." Jesus Himself says to many at the judgment, "I never knew you!" (Matt. 7:21-23) and yet these people supposedly did many things in the name of the Lord. **How sad to have only "theology" and a "belief system" when God wants us to have a living, loving relationship with Him.** Here are some quotes from a member of our recovery groups who has been having a struggle with this same issue: "I have tried to make myself BELIEVE the truth in God's word pertaining to these issues. I have put a good effort into renewing my mind, and hence, my foundational core beliefs and view of God. Yet, the scripture did not heal me, which led to only further despair, and further convinced me that God does not love me.... If He did love me, and I was obedient in my life and I read His word diligently, He would heal me of my pain, right? I didn't expect for it to happen over night. I've dedicated the past six years of my life to seeking the Lord, of desiring to really, truly know Him. Two of those years were sinful and naturally unfruitful, but the remaining four have been desperate and sincere. Why then, if I had wholeheartedly tried to renew my mind, led an obedient life of service, prayed and read the Word daily, read Christian books on healing and the like, was honest in EVERY possible way with the Lord, worked the twelve steps, prayed and had prayer for healing, etc., did I still struggle to know my Savior? Well, the answer is simple... I DID everything.....no amount of DOING will bring me closer to my Savior. One thing will.... calmly, privately, patiently, honestly resting with Him is the only way..... [*doing things*] will not get me any closer to the Lord, or relieve me of all my pain and fears. Yes, the roots of the pain are all things mentioned in [*this*] article... but knowledge of these roots doesn't heal them. Bible verses about "the Love of God" don't change anything. **That's all head knowledge.** I have enough head knowledge to cause an aneurysm. I need heart knowledge, and in my experience, no amount of trying to force things from my head to my heart will ever bring me closer to Jesus. So, what is the solution as it relates to Jesus Himself? Resting in His arms. How can we help others to do the same? Love them like we love little innocent babies..... **for those like me, who have been raised without love and affection, no**

amount of scripture, no amount of doing, no amount of knowledge, will cause me to have peace in my heart, and Jesus in my life. How I long to love my Jesus. Only by quietly whispering to each other do He and I know true love. Let me praise Him now for revealing His sweetness to me. Me... an unworthy, wounded, starved, helpless little child. I love Him so. And finally, after an entire lifetime of being unable to say this, He loves me too."

- **Psalm 27:8** "When You said, 'Seek My face,' my heart said to You, 'Your face, Lord, I will seek.'"