

Are You Mad at God?

✖ Many people who are angry at God won't admit they think He has wronged them. But the bitterness in your heart is a telltale sign that you're blaming Him.

I have met both agnostics, who question the existence of God, and atheists, who do not believe in God, but what amazes me is the number of people I meet who are bitter toward God. Some people are angry about terrible things that have happened in their lives or families. Others have had someone close to them die, and they react by blaming God: "Why did You take my brother?" or "How could You have taken my mother when I was only 5 years old?"

Sometimes they figure they will "get even" with God if they stop putting their faith in Him. As Psalm 1:1 says, they sit "in the seat of the scornful" (NKJV) and are antagonistic toward Him. Whatever their reasons, they are mad at God. Many actually hate Him.

Bitterness toward God can be hard to face and is often overlooked, excused or deeply hidden. It can lie far below the surface, beneath the other "junk in your trunk." You can unload poisonous unforgiveness, fatal connections to your offenders, unfocused anger, bad habits such as complaining and causing strife, and lots of other junk. But if you keep bitterness toward God deep down in the bottom of your trunk, you will be sidelined in your spiritual race. That burden will keep you from going anywhere.

Admit It and Quit It

I have often given my congregation this counsel: "Admit it and quit it." You can see why our church has a ministry department staffed with associate pastors who are more adept at patient, tactful counseling than I am! If our people need intensive help with ongoing issues, they know that the senior pastor's office is probably not the best place to start. The first part

of my advice, however-"Admit it"-is exactly the place to start if you are mad at God.

So many people who are mad at God will not admit that they believe God has done them wrong. They may be afraid other people will be shocked by such an admission, or they may not want to face someone who will try to "talk them out of it." But honestly admitting that they think God has done them wrong is the first step in freeing themselves from this destructive burden.

Job was mad at God and declared it in Job 27:2: "'As God lives, who has taken away my justice, and the Almighty, who has made my soul bitter.'" No two ways about that-Job was mad at God.

Very often blaming our troubles or sorrows on God stems from a misunderstanding, and that was certainly the case with Job. Let's look at a few other statements Job made and uncover the misunderstanding at the root of his bitterness.

"'Therefore I say, "He destroys the blameless and the wicked." If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, who else could it be?'" (Job 9:22-24).

In Job's mind at this point, God is the author of every bad thing on Earth. Maybe that is your mind-set, too.

Job was sure God destroyed both the blameless and the wicked. If a scourge came, Job felt God laughed at the suffering. If judges handed down poor decisions, Job said God had covered their faces.

But we know from Scripture that God does not destroy the upright with the wicked. He is not amused at the suffering caused by plagues such as AIDS. Nor is He pleased with the decisions of wicked judges. So if God is not at the bottom of

terrible things, then what is the answer to the question everyone who is bitter toward God asks: "Who else could it be?"

We have a little easier time coming up with that answer than Job had. We have an advantage that he did not have; he could not pick up a Bible and read Job 1, 2 and 3. Job is the oldest book in the Bible, and in the first three chapters ever written, we find that God was not making Job's life (and everyone else's) miserable-it was Satan. "Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7). Yet Job was convinced that God was his attacker:

"'I was at ease, but He has shattered me; He also has taken me by my neck, and shaken me to pieces; He has set me up for His target, His archers surround me. He pierces my heart and does not pity; He pours out my gall on the ground. He breaks me with wound upon wound; He runs at me like a warrior'" (16:12-14).

God is after me, Job thought. He's picking me to pieces. But the devil was after Job, not God. In fact, God said to the devil, "'Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?'" (1:8). God greatly loved His servant Job.

God greatly loves you, even when you are furious with Him. You should be furious with the things that pick your life to pieces, but perhaps your fury is misdirected. Perhaps it results from the same misunderstanding Job had in his mind.

You should not be mad at God; you should be mad at the devil and mad at the sin in the world that allows him in. When you have cleared up that misunderstanding, you are ready to follow the second part of my standard counseling advice: "Quit it." Quit targeting God with your anger and get mad at the right

target-Satan-the author of every bad thing on Earth!

Theology Made Simple

Though the Bible is true and the statements I quoted from Job are contained in it, to avoid any confusion, remember that the Bible also states that Job's theology was wrong. The first thing God said when He showed up to talk with Job was, loosely paraphrased, "Job, you don't know what you're talking about." Job 38 tells us the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, "'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?'" (vv. 1-2).

Put another way, if we listen to Job's dark counsel and foolish words, we will walk in darkness as he did and perhaps counsel others to do the same. It amazes me that most of the church does this very thing, picking up its doctrine of why bad things happen on Earth straight from the faulty theology of Job.

Many Christians have told me, "God gave me this cancer [or MS or other disease] because I needed to draw closer to Him" or "God let this awful situation happen to teach me a lesson." Though we do often draw closer to Him through sickness or trials, and though He is in the business of turning terrible situations around to our benefit, God does not cause bad things to happen to us so that He can try to get a good result out of them. It is Satan, "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), who is responsible for evil.

We need to remember that not everything that happens on Earth is the will of God. If it were, there would be no need for us to pray the prayer Jesus taught us, which says in part, "'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven'" (Matt. 6:10). Jesus Himself demonstrated what God wills on Earth. Anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power, Jesus "went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil" (Acts 10:38). Who oppressed everyone Jesus came to heal? Right-the devil.

God did not bring sickness, disease, oppression and bondage into the world. The devil did-the thief who comes only “to steal and to kill and to destroy” (John 10:10). If anything steals from you, kills you or destroys your life, it did not come from God.

John 10:10 is really the great divide that shows us what comes from God and what comes from the devil. It also says Jesus came “that [we] may have life, and that [we] may have it more abundantly.”

You can tell from this verse what comes into your life from God and what does not. All that steals, kills and destroys comes from the devil, and all that gives life abundantly comes from God.

Other verses confirm this great divide, and many verses warn us not to be deceived about its truth. Interestingly, every time the Bible says “do not be deceived,” it refers to an area where most of the church is deceived. If you can grasp the truth in these next verses, you will be a step ahead of 90 percent of theologians:

“Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:16-17).

What comes down from God? Every good and perfect gift. With Him there is no variation or shadow of turning. God does not have bad days or moods. God is the same every day, the same yesterday, today and forever. He is a good God-all the time.

Good God-Bad Devil

If terrible things have happened to you and you have reacted by overloading your trunk with bitterness toward God, you have probably asked yourself the unbearable question: If God is bad, life is truly hopeless-what’s the use of even carrying

on? Bitterness toward God is always an unbearable burden-but it is also an unnecessary one. God is not the author of anything bad; He authors only the good gifts that make your life abundant.

If you have had a loved one die, realize that God is not the author of death. He calls death an enemy. Death showed up when the devil did.

If you want to know what God is like, look at the Garden of Eden before the fall. No sickness, no death. And after the fall, God sent His Son "to undo (destroy, loosen, and dissolve)" the works of the devil (1 John 3:8, The Amplified Bible). When Jesus comes again, the devil will get his due and be gone. And sin, death, sickness, disease, war, pestilence-all that steals, kills and destroys-will be gone, too. When God is in charge again, He will "wipe away every tear" from our eyes and "there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4, NKJV).

Good God-bad devil. That is all the theology you will ever need. God is not your enemy; God is your answer. You are right to get mad about the destructive things that happen in life, but you need to get mad at the devil, not God.

You have probably heard the warning, Do not "give place to the devil" (Eph. 4:27), but there is one place you do need to give him: a place in your theology. You must realize that he is your personal enemy and that he hates you. He has an army of demonic spirits who also hate you, and they all are out to steal, kill and destroy so that you will live the worst life imaginable.

If that realization does not have a place in your theology, you will think God is attacking you when your attacker is actually the devil. You will blame God for everything that happens.

The entire book of Job was about how he experienced a number of tragedies and blamed God. Job accused God of setting him up as a target and piercing his heart (see Job 16:12-13), but the Bible clearly states that it was Satan who attacked Job.

Job finally realized his mistake and stopped accusing God. He confessed: “‘I have uttered what I did not understand ... but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes’” (Job 42:3,5-6). Paraphrased, that means: “Now that I’ve seen You for who You are, Lord, I know I was wrong about You. I am turning around and going in a different direction.”

Then Job prayed for his friends, whose theology had also been dead wrong, and God “restored [his] losses. ... Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before” (Job 42:10). God completely turned Job’s life around when Job got his theology straight and then prayed for his friends. Job was twice as blessed as before.

Good God-bad devil. Theology is that simple. Show that you believe it by repenting of your bitterness toward God and redirecting your anger toward the devil today.

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