

## **The Truth About God” Part 2 of Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable**

Message for Sunday, October 21, 2018

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:8-9, 15-17; 3:1-7

### **Children's Message:**

I'm going to interview the parent of a toddler. I'll start with, "I've heard some things about you that concern me. I've heard that you are a heartless and mean person, who won't let your child have any fun. When he/she wants to roam around, you say, 'No, you can't do that' and 'No, you can't go there.' And here I always thought you were a rather nice person."

The parent (who knows about this ahead of time, and agreed to do this), will respond. He/she will describe how those rules are to keep the child safe, such as "No, you may not play with the stove" and "No, you may not go out on the road." Rather than being a sign of a vindictive parent, these rules are signs of a loving parent.

That's a picture of what God is like, too.

**Proverbs 3:11-12, New Living Translation:**  
My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.

**Message** "The Truth About God" Part 2 of  
*Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable*  
(based on a message by Rick Warren)

This message is part of a series called "Dismissing the Myths that Make Us Miserable." We're going to look at some myths about God. This is important, because the way you see God actually affects the way you see yourself. You're made in the image of God; so if you have a distorted image of God, you're going to have a distorted image of yourself.

Before we get into the myths, I want to lay a foundation. What is God like? The best person to answer that is Jesus, who knows God better than anyone else.

### **1) God is our heavenly Father**

When Jesus came along, he exploded all of the myths, all of the misconceptions, all of the stereotypes about God. Because, up to that point,

God had been seen primarily as someone who's distant; someone who is powerful, but isn't close and personal. Jesus taught that the number one way we can think of God is as our heavenly Father. I did a quick search of the gospels and found 171 times that Jesus calls God, "Father." And he tells us that we can do the same:

**Luke 11:2, Today's English Version:**

Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say this: 'Father, may your holy name be honoured.' "

That is a problem for many people. "Father" brings up all kinds of painful memories. They think of someone who was distant, or uncaring, or unconcerned, or wasn't around when they needed him, or was cruel and abusive. So God will seem distant, or uncaring, or unconcerned, or not around when you need him, or even cruel.

Sometimes people tell me, "I don't believe in God." When I hear that, I often ask them, "Please describe the kind of God you don't believe in," because I have often found out that they believe some myths about God. If you buy into any of these myths, they will rob you of so much happiness in life. So let's look at these myths, and apply the truth—compare them to what Jesus says about God.

Today we're going to look at a myth about God that is very common today.

### **2) The Myth: "God is unreasonable"**

Even believers fall for this myth. It goes like this: "God places so many demands on my life, there is no way I could possibly do them all. God is too strict. God is unreasonable. All he wants me to be is a good and boring person. God doesn't want me to have fun. God is a kill-joy and a grouch." Some people have an image of God as some kind of stern, scowling grandfather who sits up in heaven looking down on us, waiting for somebody to have a moment of fun so he can say, "Stop that!"

Now this isn't a new myth. In fact, it's the first myth about God recorded in the Bible!

Here's how it started. The Bible says God created the Garden of Eden which was the perfect paradise filled with every possible thing of pleasure and gave it to Adam and Eve for them to enjoy:

Genesis 2:16-17, Contemporary English Version: (God) “You may eat fruit from any tree in the garden, except the **one** that has the power to let you know the difference between right and wrong. If you eat any fruit from that tree, you will die before the day is over!”

God told Adam and Eve, “Here I put you in Paradise and you can do anything you want to in this garden. It’s all for you — total pleasure, total delight; do anything you want to do. You can eat anything, you can do anything you want; however, there is just one thing I don’t want you to do. There is one tree out of all the thousand trees in this garden whose fruit I don’t want you to eat.” Is that unreasonable? No. It wasn’t like he said 90% of the garden is off limits.

Why did he even have one thing that was off-limits? Because he wanted to provide people with a choice. God wants you to love him because you choose to love Him, not because there is no other choice.

The Bible says Satan comes along a little while later in chapter 3, and he says to Eve:

Genesis 3:1, New Century Version:  
(Satan) “Did God really say that you must not eat fruit from any tree in the garden?”

Do you catch the shift here? Do you hear what he’s done? He switched the truth for a lie. God said, “There’s just one you can’t eat,” and Satan says, “There’s none you can eat.” He’s trying to make God appear unreasonable.

I want to ask those of you who are parents: have you ever said to your child: “I want you to wear your helmet every time you ride your bike; it’s for your own protection.” Or let’s say you’ve got a teenager and you say, “Now, I want you to have a good time, but I want you to be back by 11:00 p.m.” Inevitably, your child will say, “You never let me have any fun.” Have you heard that line?

Have you said that they can’t have any fun? No. Have you put the whole world off limits? No.

You’ve just said that you don’t want them doing this one thing. They say, “It’s unreasonable for there to be any limitations on me.” “You’re a kill-

joy. You’re too strict.” But you’re doing it because you love them.

Now, we treat God the exact same way. God has given us so many gifts, but when he puts any restrictions on that gift, we say, “God is unreasonable. We should have no limitations on us.”

### 3) The Truth: God is compassionate

The truth is, God is not unreasonable. The Bible says that God is compassionate:

Psalm 103:13, New Living Translation:  
The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.

Psalm 145:9, New Living Translation:  
The Lord is good to everyone. He showers compassion on all his creation.

“Compassionate” means motivated by love. Everything that God does, even when he says “no” to certain things, is because he loves you.

Let’s take water, for example: is water a gift from God? Sure, it is. You can’t live without water. In fact, your body is about 80% water. Water is a gift of God, but can water be misused? Sure, you can drown in it if you misuse it.

How about fire? Is fire a gift from God? Yes! Fire warms, fire illuminates, fire creates coziness; but fire out of control, fire misused — you get burned.

Is food a gift from God? Yes, absolutely. Can food be misused? Do I even need to answer that one?

Is sex a gift from God? (*the people in the back row just woke up—I said the magic word!*) Yes! Can it be abused? Absolutely. But do you see what happens? People complain, “God is unreasonable. God gives us sexual desires and then he puts limitations on it. There should be no limitations. I should be able to fulfill my sexual desires any way I want.”

Don’t you think God knows a little bit better than we do? Can you imagine if everybody in the world used sex the way that God had intended it? There would be no venereal disease, there would be no AIDS, there would be no syphilis, no gonorrhea,

there would be no sexual abuse, there would be no rapes, there would be no molestation, there would be no broken hearts and broken homes because of infidelity, there would be no forced marriages, there would be no guilt over it, no shame over it. Don't you think it would have been a whole lot better if people had followed God's plan?

In this area, God says you can have all the sex you want! "It's my gift to you," he says, "but you must reserve it only for the person you're married to, because sex without commitment is destructive."

You see what I mean? Whenever God says "No" to me, it's because he loves me. For every *no* that he says, there are a thousand *yeses*. He is not a God of prohibition. He's a God of permission and he wants you to be full of joy. If you believe that God doesn't want you to be happy, you've been conned.

God is not unreasonable. God is compassionate, and wants the very best for us.

Maybe you grew up with a dad who was unreasonable. Maybe you grew up with a father who hurt you; and I mean he hurt you bad.

I want to say to you, I'm sorry. I'm sorry that you hurt, but you have a heavenly father who will never hurt you, never ever hurt you. He wants to be that father that maybe you never had; he is a compassionate father. Everything he does towards you, he does because he loves you. Even when he says no, it is because he loves you; he's motivated with compassion. He is a consistent father. He'll never lie to you; he'll never abuse you or use you. He always keeps his promises, he always does what's best for you. He is a father that is close and is caring. No matter who you are or what you've done, he will forgive you and accept you and love you like you've never been loved by anyone.

Author Tim Hansel tells the story of his young son Zac. Zac and Tim were out in the country, climbing around in some cliffs, when all of a sudden Tim heard a voice from above yell, "Hey, Dad! Catch me!" Tim says, "I turned around to see Zac joyfully jumping off a rock straight at me! He had jumped and *then* yelled, 'Hey dad!' "

Hansel said, "I became an instant circus act, catching him. We both fell to the ground." For a moment after Tim caught him, Tim could hardly talk, he was so surprised at what had just happened. But when he found his voice again, he said, "Zac! Can you give me one good reason why you did that?"

Zac simply looked at his daddy and said, "Sure... because you're my dad." His whole assurance was based in the fact that his father was trustworthy. He could live life to the hilt because his dad could be trusted.

That's a picture of what our heavenly Father is like. Compassionate, caring, faithful, trustworthy. With arms waiting wide open, to hold you and hug you. Will you let him?