



God Myths

"God = The Cosmic Teddy Bear" (Exodus 34:6-8)

by Pastor David Hillis, 10 April 2016

BIG IDEA: God's unconditional love has *never* meant unconditional acceptance, of beliefs or behavior.

- God is a god of love; God *is* love; but He is *more* than that. If *that* is all God is, then *yes*, He's nothing more than an all-accepting, cosmic teddy bear; a sentimental, pushover God who lets His kids get away with murder. We run into problems when we assume unconditional love brings with it unconditional acceptance. God is love, but that love doesn't keep Him from being a holy and just God.

1. God's Love Is Unconditional (v5-7b)

- God makes it clear to them and to us that He is a god of love - *unfailing love, unconditional love*. *That's* not up for debate.

2. Unconditional Love Doesn't Mean Unconditional Acceptance (v7c,d)

- True love is a holy love; it is not selfish or self-seeking. A good, loving God has to be a just God. A god perfect in love cannot turn a *blind* eye to the selfishness, the hurt that sin causes, just like a good, loving parent doesn't turn a blind eye to a misbehaving child. God doesn't delight in our suffering for the punishment of sin. Instead, He said, "I'll give you the option to put the punishment *on me*." That's what He did on the cross.

3. We Need A Healthy, Reverential Fear Of God's Holiness (V8)

- There are 2 dangers in how we relate to others who struggle with God.
 - One is to be so *truth-oriented* that we run people off from God. When someone sins, whether they are Christian or not, or when someone questions anything about God, that we get judgmental or angry and don't clearly show the love of God in those critical moments God has for them.

- The second is to be so *love and grace-oriented* that we *also* run people off from the one true God. If we are so bent toward being inclusive and accepting and loving that we try to bend or question Scripture ourselves to include people who deny or refuse to accept the truth of what it says, we are equally damaging. That false sense of security can further shut out God by making it harder for them to see God for who He truly is.

Next Step

What keeps you from fully understanding or experiencing God's perfect holiness in your life? How might you take a step closer to God to change that?

FOR MY PERSONAL TIME WITH GOD THIS WEEK:

1. R.C. Sproul once wrote, "sometimes it seems like God boils over in temper tantrums that are inexcusable; from our perspective, we can think the God of the Old Testament is brutal." Reread Exodus 34:6-7, along with 2 Chronicles 30:9, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 86:15, Psalm 103:8, Joel 2:13 and Jeremiah 4:4 in the Old Testament. As you read each of these Scriptures, how does your view of the character of God start to become clearer? What is God emphasizing in these verses?
2. Study a few verses about the holiness and justice of God (Psalm 105:3; Isaiah 43:14-15, 45:21; Zephaniah 3:5). As you read these verses, do you struggle with seeing how God loves us unconditionally while being totally unyielding in his intolerance of our sinful choices?
3. Read Romans 1, which talks about why no one has an excuse in this life for not coming to terms with God in life. How does that Scripture strike you? How would you explain it to someone else who might be having a hard time accepting God for who He is, as He explains Himself here and in other places like Exodus 34:6-7?
4. Study Psalm 114:7, 119:120; Isaiah 66:2 and Philippians 2:12. What do these passages seem to say about the holiness of God? How do they speak to you about your understanding of God and how you relate to Him? Should you relate to Him any differently at times? When, and how?