

What is your God Concept?

There once was a father who called his son to his side.

“My son.”

“Yes, father.”

“I won’t live much longer. You are my only son. When I die, all my land will pass into your hands. But I want to learn beforehand if you are worthy to receive your inheritance. If you obey what I will tell you I might leave my land to you. If you do not obey, before I die I will sell my fields and give my money to someone else. This is what I want you to do: It is the time of harvest. You will work in my fields for one month. You will take the harvest and put it in sacks and put it in the barn. After that you will go to my grandfather’s country. While you are going there you will fast from food. There you will pray in front of my grandfather’s grave. If you do all of this perhaps you will be heir.

“Okay, I will do it father. But you said, ‘perhaps.’ What does ‘perhaps’ mean? After I do all that will I not certainly get my inheritance?”

“There is no certainty. You have to work enough. I will look at it. If you gather enough produce, if you fast well and if you pray, perhaps I will accept it. But I don’t promise.”

“Father, do you love me?” the son asked.

“My son! Is such a question asked? I am your father.”

“I apologize father. But how much produce is necessary? How will I know if I fast well enough to please you? How will I know that the prayer I make before your grandfather’s tomb will be enough to please you?”

“Until I judge you cannot know.”

With those words, the son went to work in the fields with a heavy heart. Five times a day he would gather up the sacks he had filled and take them to the barn. But with every load he lifted he was curious: “Will this much produce be enough? Will I receive my inheritance or won’t I? Does my father really love me? Why did he keep saying, “perhaps”? If I knew that my work was sufficient, I would do it with gladness. But now I work nervously in doubt. I have no joy. There is no pleasure in it. It is a grievous duty” he said.

One day while working in the fields he saw two people singing as they worked in the neighbor’s field. At noon, the son began to talk with them.

“You sing while you are working. You work happily.”

“Yes” said the neighbor. “My father sent me to work in the field.”

Son: "I am also working in my father's fields. My father said that if I work enough he might leave the fields to me as an inheritance."

Neighbor: "Is that right? How much do you have to work?"

Son: "It is not known. I will work one month. Every day five times a day I take the sacks I filled to the barn. After that I will fast while I go to my father's grandfather's tomb and make prayers there. If I please my father he might not sell the fields to someone else and maybe he will give the fields to me as an inheritance."

Neighbor: "You are probably feeling a lot of stress. There is no guarantee."

Son: "What is your situation?"

Neighbor: "My father sent me to his field to work. He said, 'If you obey my word and do what I say, without doubt you will have all that I own. I give you my word.' I said to him, 'What must I do father?' He said to me, 'You will cancel my debt at the tax office. It is 50 million Turkish Lira. Then you will go and work in my field one month. You will gather 200 sacks full. If you do that, then I will definitely give you everything.' I said to my father, 'Father, I can never cover the bill. I don't have 50 million TL. By myself I cannot fill 200 sacks. It is not possible.' My father said to me, 'My son, I know that you do not have that much money. While you are in the field I will pay it myself. I will also send a helper to you. You do whatever you can. The helper will work with you. Without question you will fill 200 sacks. Don't worry about it. My plan will work. Do you believe me?' I said to my father, 'I trust you.' It's like that. We sing while we work because my father knows what he is doing. I trust him. With a helper by my side without doubt we will be successful. But if I reject the helper, if I treat him badly, then there is no way that I can fill 200 sacks by myself."

Son: "I see that your father really loves you. Did he ever tell you that?"

Neighbor: "Yes, he said it openly. But more than with words, I know that he loves me by his actions. Because he didn't leave me in doubt."

Many people's God concept is like the first father in our story. That father didn't give to his son any assurance of an inheritance, and will not give. He always wants, but never is a help. There is only a command to work. Along with this there is no expression of love. Perhaps your God concept is like that. You respect God because you have to but you are just a servant. Perhaps you say, "I love God" because it is a shame if you don't. But in your heart are you curious if it is just the fear of punishment or the hope of reward that motivates you to action? If that is the case then your service to God really doesn't stem from love does it? Your relationship with God is just slavery.

Satan wants us to look at God in that manner. Satan attributes his own character to God. Because Satan knows that if we see God as He really is then the deceptions that he is trying to use on us will lose their power.

God expresses His love in His word openly:

Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD has appeared of old to me, *saying*: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.

Our creator is drawing us to himself. He is searching for us. If you are searching for God, it certainly means that you are simply responding to His drawing you.

Romans 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?

The Lord is drawing you to Himself by His Spirit and by showing His goodness.

God shows His love to us with His actions. We cannot cover our sin debt. In our story, like the neighbor, we have no means to do it. The wages of sin is eternal death. But our heavenly Father knows that we cannot pay it and paid it Himself.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

1 John 3:1 Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Many people say, "We are not God's children." But the Bible says we are. Why do people not understand this? Because they don't know God. They still look at God like they look at the first son's father in the story. They cannot enter our joy.

And there is assurance of our salvation. God does not leave us in doubt.

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

Ephesians 1:12-14 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who

is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Let's look at these steps. What is the word of truth? Yes, it is the preaching of Jesus Christ and the letters of the apostles. What is the gospel of our salvation? The same. "In whom having believed." Who is that? Yes, it is Jesus Christ. What happened when you believed in Christ? The Holy Spirit seals you in Christ.

What is a seal? A seal is a formal symbol. It is something that shows that something formally belongs to someone. In ancient times letters were sometimes sealed. They would roll a letter up and wrap it with strings. Then on top of the strings they would put soft clay. Then the letter writer would take a metal thing that had his name and symbol carved in it, sometimes in the form of a ring, and he would press it in the soft clay. This would leave the imprint of the name and symbol in the clay. When the clay hardened, the letter could not be read without breaking the seal. In our day, if you don't pay your water bill, IZSU will come to your house and put a seal on your water valve. That seal belongs to IZSU. If you break it they will take you to court.

When you believe, The Holy Spirit seals you in Christ. You belong to Christ. This is your assurance of being raised to eternal life.

Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

The Holy Spirit is also our helper. In our story the good father did not send his son to the fields alone. Our Heavenly Father also does not leave you alone to fight Satan and his temptations.

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Who is the helper? It is the Holy Spirit. Is the Helper, in Greek the paracletos, a prophet that will be sent 500 years later? It is not. It is the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16-17 "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever -- ¹⁷ "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

The Holy Spirit will live in you. He is your guarantee of resurrection. But along with this, He is also a helper against sin.

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God *did* by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He

condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Thus you can obey God's law from the heart. Formerly, when the Holy Spirit was not in you, because of selfishness, you could not obey the law with love. Now because the Helper, that is the Holy Spirit, lives in you, you can obey with love.

What is your God concept? Do you see Him as a God who always wants but never helps? Do you see God as a God that does not express His love in either words or deeds? Do you see God as a God that requires you to seek Him? Do you see God as a God that give you no assurance of your resurrection from the dead?

That is not the truth. The Bible says that God is love. 1 John 4:8. God expressed His love you. He loves you so much that in order to cover your sin debt, He offered His own son as a sin offering. The true God is seeking you and is drawing you to Himself. If you do not resist He will carry you to eternal life. He does not leave you alone in the war with sin. He will give the Holy Spirit which is the parakletos. The Holy Spirit will give you power to keep the Ten Commandments from the heart. If the Holy Spirit lives in you, then you know that you have eternal life. That is, this is your assurance of salvation.

That is the truth.