

It Is Written

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Is God a Narcissist?

By Richard Blackford

I participate periodically in discussions on a website that atheists run.

The accusation has been made frequently that God is a narcissist. He is depicted as a self-centered tyrant absorbed in himself who wants everyone groveling at His feet and needs constant attention.

I believe this is a misunderstanding. Some fail to understand what it means for God to be a jealous God. When God says He is jealous of idols, it is not because they pose any personal threat to Him. As Paul said, "an idol is nothing in the world" (I Corinthians 8:4). It is because they are a threat to US, not to Him. False gods lead us away from the true God who can and wants to save us. We are the ones harmed by believing in false gods. God is not jealous on His behalf but on ours. He is jealous for us because of what will happen if we turn away from Him to false gods. We need to focus on Him for our good, not because He needs anything from us. He already owns everything. We have nothing He needs. He is motivated by love, not narcissism. He could have easily created a race of robots that would unquestionably praise him forever. There was no need to create human beings with free will who could rebel against Him and curse Him, as many have.

Apart from putting Him first (for man's benefit), can you think of any other command that is not ultimately for our own good? Notice four ways that praising God is actually a blessing.

1. When someone gives us a gift, most of the joy is expressing our love and gratitude to the giver. That person has shown us love by giving the gift. We show love by receiving the gift with joy and gratitude. By this, the love between the two parties grows, and the joy we each experience grows accordingly. That's why it's frustrating to receive an anonymous gift. I was out of state a month ago and ate with five other Christians. Someone anonymously paid for all six of us, a sizeable sum. I have tried in vain to find out who to thank.

2. Not only is our joy increased by giving thanks, but it is also increased when we can share that joy with one another. Two people who enjoy art will enjoy it even more if they go to the museum together. They can then express their appreciation to one another as they look at the beautiful artwork. We actually enjoy the beautiful creation God has provided much more when we can join voices with others who appreciate it and sing God's praises together.

3. One of the greatest benefits we receive from singing His praises is strengthening our faith. When a group can sing praise to God together and openly confess our faith with others, we all have our faith strengthened.

4. Probably the greatest blessing that comes from praising God is that each time we sing His praises, we actually come a little closer to being like Him. Back of every form of praise is the notion that the one being praised is worthy of being imitated. When we praise someone, we are generally saying we would like to be like or able to produce something like what we are praising. For example, when we praise a woman for her cooking, we say we would like to cook like that. If we praise a man for his courage, we're really saying that if we were faced with a similar trial, we would like to show the same courage we see in him. Above that, when we genuinely praise God, it will stir deep within us a longing to be like him. That's the theme of the Bible. "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2). Jesus "went about doing good" (Acts 10:38). Don't you want to be like that?

At the beginning of the Bible, we see Adam and Eve, created in God's image, enjoying perfect union with Him. Almost immediately, sin mars the picture. From then on, God's purpose has been to redeem man

from sin's curse and reconcile him to God. To draw us nearer to Him, He has ordained that we sing His praises and that our hearts be stirred with the desire to be like Him—holy as He is holy.

God's command that we praise Him is not to have us groveling at His feet but a desire to lift us up to sit with Him in glory. The more we give, the more we are like Him. Giving of Himself is the very nature of the God who gave His only Son on our behalf. God is far from being a narcissist, and He deserves an apology.

Never Speak Evil

By Doy Moyer

Never speak evil. We are not to speak evil of anyone, including those in positions of power. Not even Michael the archangel would bring a railing accusation against the devil, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (Jude 9) The powers that be are in God's hands and judged according to His will; in His time, He will deal with them as He wills. When they fail to honor God, then He will judge them.

This is not to say that we endorse or appreciate everything about people in power. I have severe differences with many who make laws, and I try to leave no doubt as to where I stand on moral issues (like abortion or homosexual activity). However, as a Christian, I try to be careful about what I would say about those in authoritative positions, especially when I disagree with them. We can deal appropriately with the various issues without bringing railing accusations against those in power or dishonoring their position.

Remember the example of Jesus (I Peter 2:21-25): "For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps, who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth; and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously...."

If we are truly disciples of Jesus, then we will seek to follow this example. This should impact how we interact in person, on social media, or any other form of communication. Christians do not get to hide behind a wall so they can insult and revile. Even when being put to death in the most shameful and degrading way as a criminal by the ruling authorities, Jesus did not revile or insult but rather offered forgiveness and died so that they could choose to enter into His grace.

The Importance of Obedience

By Kyle Campbell

James 1:22-25 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

We should want to be a doer of the word. The Bible is not for display, analysis, or contemplation. It exists to be obeyed! So important is it to be obeyed that James later says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). The "whole law" in vs. 10 is the "royal law" in vs. 8. This is the law of Christ.

We can't pick and choose what we want to do. As we learn our responsibilities to God, we have to put what we learn into practice. James 4:17 says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." If you would like a good role model, use the Bereans who would "search the scriptures daily" to see how to measure up to God's standard (Acts 17:11). If you are failing, then repent and obey the way you should -- the way God wants you to!