

Fake News About God
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We are in a series called Fake News. Fake news is inaccurate news presented as factual. Sometimes, it's deliberate misinformation. We hear it all the time on TV about politics, people or current events. Unfortunately, we hear it all the time in churches too, or on TV from preachers or people...misrepresenting God and the Bible.

Today I'm speaking on Fake News About God.

A.W. Tozer said, "What we believe about God is the most important thing about us." This is so true because:

It will influence everything we do and say.

It will impact our entire lives for good or for bad.

It will inspire every decision we make and every path we take.

Yet many who say their Christians have derived their beliefs about God as much from the world as from the Bible. So, they have a mixture of truth and false teachings. Which is half-truths - which isn't truth at all.

Such as...

God is love so He wouldn't let someone go to hell.

God is merciful so He will remove any consequences for my sin.

God is accepting so He understands that all paths lead to truth.

The Bible warned against this kind of thinking in Galatians 5:7-9:

You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough.

In this passage yeast is symbolic of false teachers teaching fake news that keeping Jewish laws resulted in salvation. Paul is writing the church to correct this fake news. He tells them that Christ has set them free and that going back to the law would be a yoke of slavery. They would be putting themselves under the law rather than grace. And being under the law required keeping the whole law which no man could do.

Paul was screaming "FAKE NEWS!!!" At one point, he says "Who has bewitched you, you foolish Galatians?" These false teachers are teaching false doctrine and even the smallest amount of false doctrine contaminates the whole of their teaching.

So, if you believe you are saved by keeping the law and you break even one teeny, tiny part of the law then you are guilty of breaking the whole law.

James 2:10 says:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.

So, if salvation comes through keeping the law, your beliefs could be 99% true and 1% false and that 1% could send you straight to hell. One sin – just one - is all it would take.

Matthew 13:33 explains it like this:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like the yeast a woman used in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it permeated every part of the dough.

Unfortunately, the disciples thought Jesus was talking about making bread. Jesus corrected them in Matthew 16:11-12:

Why can't you understand that I'm not talking about bread? So again I say, 'Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.'

Then at last they understood that He wasn't speaking about the yeast in bread, but about the deceptive teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

So, Jesus is telling us that even a little bit of false teaching will contaminate everything in our lives. This is why it's so important to study God's word. Then we won't be led astray by fake news.

So, with this in mind let's look at:

Fake News #1 - God Is Whatever I Want Him to Be

"I believe in God" has become one of the most meaningless statements of our time. Why? Because so many people have made God into what they want Him to be. They believe in a god that fits into their idea of who god should be rather than who God really is. They believe in a god of their own making.

In Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses *"I am who I am."*
Not "I am who you want me to be."

So, when we make God into what we want Him to be we are putting an image of god before God. Yet, the first commandment is to have no gods before God. This is idolatry. It's creating an image of a god that is manageable and willing to consider our ways and do what we want.

An image is a copy or a duplicate. It appears to be like the real thing but it's really just an imitation or an image of the real thing.

It's like an image in a mirror. An image in a mirror is not real. For example, have you ever looked in a mirror and it made you look either skinnier or heavier than you really are? That's because you aren't seeing the exact representation of the real thing. You are seeing an image. Images aren't the real thing. And idols are images. Idols usually resemble God but they are far from who God really is.

Idolatry can be simply having wrong ideas or believing fake news about who God is. For example:

- God saved me because I am a good person.
- God saved me because I read my Bible, pray and go to church.
- God is inclusive and there are many ways that lead to heaven.
- God should give me what I want because I have faith. He knows I need a new house or a more money or a better job.
- God protects me from all suffering.
- God understands my sin. He understands that I live with my boyfriend because I can't afford the rent by myself.
- God will overlook my sin because He knows I meant well. He knows I didn't mean to gossip, or lie, or cheat or steal.

These are all idols because they are a false image of who God is. And when we make God into our image we will always be disappointed. Our idols will always fail us.

Listen to what Psalm 115:3-8 says about our idols.

Our God is in heaven; He does whatever pleases him. But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.

This passage is showing us that idols are powerless to save.

In I Kings 18 the people were worshipping idols. So, Elijah decides to show them who the real God is. He tells them to get two bulls, choose one for themselves and he will take the other one. Then he tells them to prepare the bull, place it on wood but not set fire to it.

Elijah would do the same with the second bull. Then instead of setting fire to the bull they each call on the name of their God and whichever God answers with fire – He is God.

So, the people did as instructed and they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon but there was no answer.

So they shouted but there was no answer.
 So they danced but there was no answer...no one answered.
 So, Elijah begins to taunt them...saying shout louder – maybe your god is thinking or busy or traveling or sleeping.
 Still no matter what they did their god did not answer.

So, Elijah calls the people and tells them to prepare the altar and place the second bull on it. He tells them to dig a trench around the altar and pour water on the offering and on the wood - not once but three times until the water filled the trench.

I Kings 18:36-39 tells what happened:

*At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and have done all these things at Your command. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You are turning their hearts back again."
 Then the fire of the Lord fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord - He is God! The Lord - He is God!"*

The people worshiped an idol but their idol was powerless.

Here's the truth...we all worship something. The question is not will we worship it's what will we worship.

God is not whatever we want Him to be. He is who His word says He is. So, read the word and ask God to show you who He is. This is how you replace fake news with the good news.

Fake News #2 - God changed because times have changed.

Wrong! God does not change. In Malachi 3:6 God said *For I am the Lord, I do not change.*

God never changes. If He did – we could never count on Him or His promises – because they might change. But nothing about God ever changes!
 He doesn't become older, or wiser, or nicer.
 He doesn't get stronger or weaker.
 He doesn't change for the better.
 His truth does not change.
 His commandments do not change.

Two more things that never change are found in Psalm 77:13-14
Your ways, O God, are holy. What god is so great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles; You display Your power among the peoples.

God's holiness never changes and God's miraculous power never changes! Don't be led astray by those who tell you God has changed.

Hebrews 13:8 says *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.* The very next verse says *Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings.*

What are those strange teachings?

A different Jesus – a Jesus who has changed from the Jesus of the New Testament. But the Bible says Jesus does not change. Whatever He did in Bible days, He does now.

If He saved then, He saves now.

If He healed then, He heals now.

If He delivered then, He delivers now.

If He baptized in the Holy Spirit then, He baptizes in the Holy Spirit now.

If He did signs and wonders then, He does signs and wonders now.

So - let's be a contemporary church established in the ancient truths of the Word of God and the supernatural power of God! James 1:17 says:

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

This passage is contrasting God with the sun. Both are a source of light.

But the sun has obvious changes.

It does not shine on all parts of the earth at the same time, or in the same way throughout the year.

It casts a different shadow depending on the angle from which it shines.

It rises and then sets.

Its revolutions cause the changes of the seasons.

But God is not like the sun. It's like He has one angle from which He shines and it never changes. It's like the sun stood still at noon and cast one eternal shadow. God does not change like shifting shadows.

He is always the same, at all seasons of the year, and in all ages; there is no change in His character, His being, or His purposes and plans. What He was millions of ages ago, He is today. What He is today, He will be millions of ages from now.

We may be sure that whatever changes happen in our lives, whatever struggles we may face, whatever victories we may gain, whatever oceans we may cross, or whatever mountains we may climb... God is the same, yesterday, today and forever!!

Fake News #3 - I must earn God's love.

This is a big lie because you can't earn something that is already freely given.

God's love is freely given. You could do everything right, every day, and it wouldn't be enough to earn God's love.

I wonder why we would think we can earn His love when we know we can't earn His salvation. That just doesn't make sense. Ephesians 2:8-9 says:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

So, if we can't earn salvation why would we have to earn God's love? The answer is we wouldn't.

I think one of the reasons we try to earn God's love is due to our performance-oriented culture. We're conditioned to believe that if we work hard we will earn what we want. So, we go through school, study hard, and work overtime so we can get a good job and a good paycheck. No one just hands us a paycheck at the end of the week. We have to earn it. Not so with God's love. John 3:16 says:

For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Are you part of this world? Yes. Then God loves you.
 He loved you before you were born.
 He loved you when you took your first steps.
 He even loved you when you committed your first sin.
 He loved you when you committed your most recent sin.
 God loves sinners and God loves saints.

However, according to one study 16 percent of Americans think of God as critical and disengaged. They see God as someone who sits in heaven watching our every move and just waiting to punish us. These individuals believe they must earn God's love by being good or doing more.

This is what Martha tried to do when Jesus came to visit her and Mary. The Gospel of Luke tells us that Martha busied herself with tasks instead of just being with Jesus.

Essentially, she was saying, "Look at me, Jesus, and all I'm doing for you!" Maybe she felt she had to earn His love. Mary on the other hand just sat at Jesus feet enjoying His presence. She wasn't trying to earn His love.

In Luke 10:41-42 Jesus says...

"Martha, Martha... you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Jesus makes it clear that it is better if we forget trying to earn His love and just enjoy how much He loves us.

Still so many people see God as unloving. Another study showed that 31 percent of Americans believe that God is an angry authoritarian, and ready to punish us at any time. A Baylor University study said that nearly three out of every four Americans view God as furious, critical or distant.

The “God-is-mad” belief is what Adam and Eve had after they sinned in the garden. Instead of seeking God’s forgiveness, they hid from God out of fear of what He would do. They saw God as punitive instead of loving and merciful.

We do the same when we say things like:

I must be sick because God is punishing me.

God took my loved one because I messed up.

Finances are tight because I let God down.

God sent a tornado, or a flood or a hurricane because I didn’t measure up to His expectations.

What a miserable way to live! This kind of thinking only drives us away from God. I’m not saying there aren’t consequences for sin but God isn’t some mean, angry, tyrant waiting for us to mess up so He can punish us.

No! God is love and everything He does, or allows in our lives is out of the utmost love. As a matter of fact, God doesn’t have love...He is love. So, it is impossible for Him to do anything in our lives apart from love.

So, what do you do when you catch yourself believing fake news about God?

You open your mouth and counter Satan’s lies with God’s truth.

You open your mouth and do warfare against the lies of the enemy.

You stop believing Satan’s lies and start believing God’s word.

You open your bible and study it, not just skim through it but really read it.

You immerse yourself in the truth of God’s word and when Satan tries to trap you with fake news about God you tell him he’s a liar and to go back to where he came from.

You resist the devil and he will flee from you.

You stop it in the name of Jesus.

Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.