

# 38. WHAT IS GOD DOING?

*Your God-view directly effects  
your emotional and cognitive well  
being.*

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

## WHAT IS GOD DOING?

*Numbers 23:19: “God is not human that He should lie. He is not a human being that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and then not fulfill?”*

The outbreak of COVID-19 has probably raised some questions about God, about His justice and if He is still in control. What exactly is His plan with all of this? Why all the suffering? Is there a plan at all? Economies are crashing. There are challenges in our homes and with our jobs and the problems are increasing as time passes.

I suppose the question we need to ask is how we react during this time of difficulty? How do we see God in our lives and in the world during times of difficulty? Every single one of us has a specific way in which we are approaching God during such times. We have a specific way in which we are viewing Him. We may view Him as unfair, or as very loving and kind and always available to us during times of distress.

How you react during times of distress is going to come directly from how you view God. If you view God as unavailable and not there for you right now, then you won't go to Him in your time of need. If you view God as a loving and caring God who has been there for you and did come through for you in the past, then He will be accessible to you. You might be part of those who are very confused, those who don't understand what God is doing to allow this? As you are trying to grapple with these things to understand God, you can't see what the meaning of all this is in the bigger picture of life. If you are asking, “God, what are You doing?”

**HOW YOU REACT DURING TIMES  
OF DISTRESS IS GOING TO  
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Why are You allowing this?" read some of the biblical stories with me and experience that you are not alone in questioning God; you are not the only one having difficulty in feeling emotionally stable during times of distress. I'd like to highlight some biblical characters who felt frustrated and hopeless and who were full of doubt and maybe even disappointed in God during times of distress.

The first person I enjoy looking at is **Jeremiah**, often called 'The Weeping Prophet'. I'd like you to read the whole passage in Jeremiah chapter 12 where Jeremiah had a conversation with the Lord and where he asked Him: "Why do the ways of the wicked prosper so? I am a good guy, I am your prophet and I am following your ways, why is it that I am struggling and going through stressful times while the wicked are living in mansions? Why is it that they are having a jolly good time?" I get the feeling that Jeremiah was frustrated when he said: "Lord, I don't understand your ways. I don't know why You work the way You do. Please explain it to me."

Then we have **John the Baptist** who dedicated his entire life to the Lord, preparing the way for the Messiah to come and then, when Jesus came onto the scene, he doubted. He was uncertain about who Jesus was. In his distress and anxiety, he sent some of the disciples to ask Jesus if He really was the Messiah, the One who was promised. He was uncertain about Jesus and he was a bit anxious. He was not in a good place because he was sitting in jail, facing death. He was troubled with doubt and anxiety. Instead of being worried about his own life while sitting in jail, the one thing he was worried about was his relationship with the Lord and who this Man really was.

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN  
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DURING TIMES OF DISTRESS.**

**Elijah** was struck with hopelessness after completing his task for the Lord, telling Ahab about the drought. After the drought and the death of the Baal priests, Jezebel threatened to kill Elijah. He wandered into the desert, hopeless and in his distress he said to the Lord that he would rather die. It was too stressful for him. He felt left alone and everything was just too much at that moment.

**Thomas** doubted. He said he would not believe unless Jesus showed him the scars in His hands and in His side. He experienced emotional distress.

**Gideon** also doubted. He couldn't believe that God wanted to use him, so he kept asking for signs.

**Moses** had fear. Moses said he couldn't talk to Pharaoh and asked God to give him Aaron to talk on his behalf.

**Jonah** became a disobedient prophet because he refused to go where God wanted him to go. He asked the Lord why he should go. "I don't understand why You want me to do this." He got onto a ship and went the other way.

**Mary and Martha** voiced their disappointment to Jesus when He finally arrived at their home after Lazarus had died. They said: "Lord, if You had been here, our brother wouldn't have died." In their disappointment they asked questions such as: "Why did You act the way You acted Lord? Why did You do the things You did?"

**Abraham** didn't believe the promises of the Lord in saying that he will become a father of many nations. As a matter of fact, at one stage he laughed when the promise came.

IN THEIR DISAPPOINTMENT MANY  
BIBLICAL CHARACTERS ASKED  
QUESTIONS. DO YOU?

I am very thankful that the Lord gave us the stories of all these Bible characters. I think many of us can relate to them. We can say: "I've been there too. I've been frustrated, uncertain about who Jesus is and if He is truly the Lord and the Messiah." There were times when we've been hopeless and wanting our lives to end. Times when we had thoughts of doubt, fear, disappointment and even disobedience. Times when maybe we even have laughed at some of the things we've read in the Bible, thinking it can't be, it seems too unrealistic.

As I looked at the lives of these different biblical characters, I realised that every single one of them was experiencing God from a different point of view. They were probably experiencing God from their emotional point of view when they were saying: "Lord, we don't understand You in all the pain we are feeling, the mental anguish we are going through. Where are You in all of this? What are You offering us? What have You brought to the table to relieve our fear, our doubt, our anxiety and hopelessness?"

I really do believe we need to realise that all those people who were struggling with mental anguish in their thoughts and in their feelings, had a very specific view of God during their anguish and during their times of distress.

**Jeremiah** might have felt that God was unfair because why did the wicked prosper? **John the Baptist** might have felt that God was far away from him. He wanted answers and God was far away. **Elijah** felt hopeless and also probably feeling that God was far away when he received the death threat.

PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE MENTAL  
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Maybe **Thomas** was doubting God's promise when He said He was going to rise from the death. Maybe he was wondering whether he could trust God. **Gideon** might have said: "Lord, no, not me. You don't have a clear view of who I am, God. You might be a God who sees things in a different way than what they really are." I believe every one of these persons had a specific way they viewed God in their distress. You and I also have a specific way we view God during our distress. We need to realise that in distress, our spiritual well-being, the way that we look at God, is going to affect whether we are going to feel good or whether we are going to feel bad.

Let me explain. Some of us have come to COVID-19 already distressed and spiritually uncertain about God and ourselves. COVID-19 has brought a lot of emotional and cognitive distress into our lives. If you were in a good place with God where you understood Him and you knew what He was doing in allowing certain things, then you would cope better with the emotional and cognitive stress of COVID-19. But many of us were already at a place where we had doubts about God. We suffered disappointments where He didn't come through in the past. Or we were disobedient to Him and we felt hopeless and maybe even felt a bit guilty. Our spiritual well-being is going to directly affect how we are going to cope mentally and emotionally during times of distress, because they affect one another. When your spirituality goes down, in other words if you are in a bad place with God, your emotional well-being is also going down.

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If COVID-19 has affected your emotional and cognitive well-being, it's probably also going to affect your spiritual well-being. It is probably going to start getting you to ask questions like: "God, why is this happening?" Or like Mary and Martha: "Why didn't You come through on time?" Or like Jeremiah, saying to God: "Lord, I don't believe this. This can't be true. Why are bad things happening to me when I am your child? I am yours, I've been reading my Bible and I've been doing what is good, why is this happening to me?"

I want you to understand what is happening or could happen during times of distress. **Your mental well-being is directly affected by your spiritual well-being** and vice versa. If you are not happy with God right now, if you're in a place where you see Him as an angry God who is punishing and is not doing what He needs to do, then you will not have peace during this time and you are going to struggle more. Therefore this presentation about **how you view God**. What does God look like to you in the thick of it all? Are you struggling with your God view when you are in distress? What does God look like to you right now in this pandemic? Is God a God who cares and loves you, who is there for you, who supports you and who is in control and will make it all work out even though you don't understand it right now?

Or is He a God who is far away, who isn't answering prayers, who is distant, who is angry and who is punishing? Do you experience Him as being very authoritative, a type of figure you have to look up to but doesn't really show the love and care you need? How you view God in the thick of things is going to affect your emotional and cognitive well-being. When I say how you view God, I'm not talking about His appearance. I don't want to know if He has white hair and if He is tall and carrying a stick with Him.

**YOUR MENTAL WELL-BEING IS  
DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY YOUR  
SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND VICE  
VERSA.**

I am talking about how you see Him in your spiritual eye, because everything in your life is going to be affected by how you view God. If you have a good view of God and you are at peace with Him, then your attitude, your motives, your desires, your actions, your words, your emotions and your thoughts will also be good.

But if you have a very negative view of God, and I'm not saying it's wrong if you have one, I'm just saying if you do have a negative view, then you are going to struggle. You are not going to have good motives, attitudes, desires, actions, words, thoughts and emotions.

I once spoke to a man at the gym who said that he had read the whole Bible and the God of the Old Testament is extremely cruel and tyrannical. He killed animals, children and nations. He couldn't serve a God like that. If the man is still out there in the world today, I wonder if he still has this view of God and if so, who he is going to for help in the distress of COVID-19. Who is helping him through the hardships in life? This can also happen to us if we have a very negative view of God. We will not be able to tap into the resources He is making available to us. We are not going to be able to go to Him for help in our emotional and cognitive distress.

Let's do an activity. You may not really be sure of how you view God right now, what your God view is. There are four basic views of God. This activity is going to help you to discover your God view. Just answer yes or no on the four different views. There is no right or wrong answer because this activity is there to show you how you think about God. Don't answer according to how the Bible says God is, but how you feel God is.

**HOW YOU VIEW GOD IN THE THICK  
OF THINGS IS GOING TO AFFECT  
YOUR EMOTIONAL & COGNITIVE  
WELL-BEING.**



1. Do you see God as an **authoritative** God, a God who makes rules and expects us to keep them and to respect Him enough to keep these rules? [Yes or no.]
2. Is God a **loving** God, a God who loves unconditionally? [Yes or no.]
3. The third God view some have of God, is that He is a critical and a **punishing** God. A God who looks to see whether we are keeping His laws and rules, and when we do not keep His rules, there are certain punishments. Do you see God today in your circumstances right now, as a critical, punishing God? [Yes or no.]
4. Do you view God as a **disengaged** God? Is God there for you, or is He completely absent? Is He disengaged? [Yes or no.]

You may have answered yes or no on these four questions. You may have answered yes, God is authoritative. You may have answered yes for loving, but you might have said no, He is not critical and punishing. You may have said no, He is not disengaged, though maybe, you may have said yes, He is disengaged in my specific situation. The answers are going to be different for every single one of us because everyone view God in a different light, we don't all see Him the same. What your specific God view is, is derived from your answers. With this activity we've noticed that each one view God differently, but how will you react if I tell you that God is actually all four of these? God is an authoritative God who makes rules and expects us to keep it. God is a loving God. He can be a critical and punishing God. And God is a disengaged God. Not only is He all four of these, but all four of these attributes of God are good.

**YOU MAY NOT REALLY BE SURE OF  
HOW YOU VIEW GOD RIGHT NOW,  
WHAT YOUR GOD VIEW IS. ASK  
YOURSELF IS HE AUTHORITATIVE?  
LOVING? PUNISHING? OR  
DISENGAGED?**

It is good for Him to be authoritative. It is good for Him to be loving. It is good for Him to be punishing and critical and it is good for Him to be disengaged. You may say: "No, that can't be. That's not the God I want to serve. That sounds very negative and very bad." The reason why we see this as bad, is because we have created a very specific God view in our heads. We have looked at God in a very specific way and sometimes it is a wrong way. This wrong way of looking at God can cause distress inside us.

What do I mean when I say God has all four of these and all four are good? Let me use the illustration of a parent. Are you a parent? Is a parent authoritative? Are parents making rules for their children and expect them to keep those rules? If your answer is yes, let us go to the next question. Is it a good thing or a bad thing for a parent to be authoritative? If you answer is yes, it is good, then why is it not a good thing for God to be **authoritative**? Take note, there is a big difference between authoritative and authoritarian. Authoritative is to make good rules to protect you from harm. Authoritarian is to make silly rules that make no sense and you are forced to keep them no matter what. God is not an authoritarian. God is authoritative. His rules are there to protect us just like a parent's rules are there to protect their children.

What about **loving**? Are you as a parent a loving parent? God is also a loving parent. But we must understand this type of love, because we get parents who love their children so much that they never rebuke them, they never tell them what they are doing, is wrong.

WE SOMETIMES LOOK AT GOD IN A  
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They love them to death in the sense that they actually allow them to get away with murder. The kids can't do anything wrong, they just love them unconditionally. It actually is not unconditional, because unconditional love means if you do something that is going to hurt or harm you, I am going to correct you. I am going to tell you it is not right, you shouldn't be doing that. Be careful of expecting God to be the kind of loving parent who allows you to get away with murder. We expect God to allow us to do whatever we want, when we want to and how we want to. This is not healthy and every loving parent knows this. This is why our love has boundaries. We love our children unconditionally, even when they do bad things, but we love them enough to tell them what they are doing wrong and that they shouldn't be doing it. So it's a good thing to be a loving parent who don't let children get away with murder. Don't then expect God to let you get away with murder. He is a good, loving parent.

What about **critical and punishing**? Are you critical and punishing when your children do things that are wrong? Then why is it not a good thing for God to punish His children to get them back into line and to help them? Let me demonstrate. When your children are small, you teach them certain rules in order to keep them safe. For example, you would tell your young son or daughter not to play at the stove. When the stove is on they shouldn't put their hands on the stove, because they are going to burn. But you know children – for them, rules are made to be broken. So your child might go and reach for the stove. When the stove is on and you see him reaching for the stove, you will most probably give him a little smack on the hand to stop him from touching the stove.

**GOD IS NOT AN AUTHORITARIAN.  
GOD IS AUTHORITATIVE. HIS  
RULES ARE THERE TO PROTECT US  
JUST LIKE A PARENT'S RULES ARE  
THERE TO PROTECT THEIR  
CHILDREN.**

As a parent you know when he puts his hand on that stove, he is going to burn badly. So the little smack you are giving him is nothing in comparison with the burn he might experience. You give him a small punishment in order to protect him from greater pain later. I believe that sometimes in our lives, God allows circumstances to punish us. For Him this little pain He is allowing right now, is nothing in comparison with the pain we are going to feel if we keep going down the wrong road. There is a road you are walking on that is not good and He loves you enough to punish you, to warn you not to do this because you are going to get hurt. But then if the children don't listen, we as parents do not keep punishing them. What do you do when the child keeps wanting to reach for the stove? You sometimes stand back and let the child touch it. When the child burns his hand, he turns around and screams at you and asks why you've hurt him. You then respond that you didn't hurt him, he hurt himself. "I've warned you, but you didn't listen."

A lot of times we are like this with God. When God punishes us, we get angry. He then stops punishing us and let us experience the natural results of our own actions. When our own actions get us into trouble, when we are suffering the consequences of our own disobedience, we want to know why God is doing it to us. Parents do these things because they love their children. Why not allow God to do the same?

Are you sometimes **disengaged** as a parent? You may answer no, but what happens when you go to work? You are working and your children are going to school. You're not with them 24/7, so you are disengaged.

SOMETIMES GOD ALLOWS  
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DOWN THE WRONG ROAD.

Disengaged doesn't mean cut off or completely removed. God is also not cut off or completely removed from us either, but He does disengage from us. Some people might say they can't see Him and they can't feel Him anymore. Disengagement is there in order to give your children the opportunity to learn responsibility. Why do parents not go to their children's sleepover party they have with their friends? Maybe when they are young, like 3 or 4 or 5, the parents tag along and go with because they are still young and dumb and need protection. But as they get older, you start to distance yourself. When they are babies, you carry them all the time. As they get older, you hold their hands and tell them to look out for the cars when they cross the street. Later when they are teenagers you don't hold their hands when they cross the street because they've learned how to cross the street safely.

I believe that God disengages for this very reason. He has taught us and now He leaves us so that we can practise what He taught us. He does not disengage because He is watching us, but He knows we need to learn to do things because we want to do it when He is not there. If a parent is constantly watching the children, the children are never going to do the bad things and they will never learn to choose between good and wrong.

God is doing the same with us. He promised that the Holy Spirit will be with us and that He is coming back to fetch us, but while He is gone He wants to see what we do with our freedom, whether we make the right choices ourselves and not because He is picking over our shoulders.

**WHEN GOD IS DISENGAGED IT  
DOESN'T MEAN CUT OFF OR  
COMPLETELY REMOVED, BUT HE DOES  
DISENGAGE FROM US JUST LIKE ANY  
PARENT GIVES THEIR KIDS ROOM TO  
DEVELOP AND GROW AND LEARN TO  
TRUST.**

Imagine what life would be like if you could see your guardian angel all the time. Imagine what life would be like if God was there every single moment of every breathing day and you could see Him visibly. You would not be able to work with the freedom God would like you to have. You would not be able to choose between right or wrong for yourself.

By now your view of God may have changed in order for you to see that all four of these are good, just like they're good for a parent. Perhaps you now see that God is all four of these and He uses these different attributes at the appropriate time and in the correct amount. If you can change your God view, your way of thinking of God will be much lighter. Your emotions will be more at ease to know that God is not purposely punishing you unrealistically. He is not sitting there waiting to kill you. God is a loving, caring God. But He cares enough to bring you back into line when needed. Did you perhaps have a very negative picture of God when we've started off? How did that make you feel and think? Maybe by now your thoughts have changed? Maybe by now you are thinking and feeling a bit differently towards God? Maybe the distress has lifted a little bit and you have learned to view God in the right way and to understand why He does certain things the way He does? This knowledge comes through the study of Scriptures and through life's experiences.

Like Mary and Martha who complained about Jesus not being there for their brother Lazarus when he was sick. They said: *"Lord, if you were here, our brother would not have died."*

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LINE WHEN NEEDED.**

But later on as they got to know Jesus better, they also got to understand what He did, better. The anxiety they felt in the beginning lifted as the Lord revealed His plan. He later rose Lazarus from the dead. 2 Peter 3:9 is one of those verses that helps us to understand that maybe the way we view God is not correct. Sometimes we may feel that the Lord is not answering our prayers, He is not coming through for us. Some may ask questions like: "Why hasn't He come yet? Why are we sitting in this world full of sin?" 2 Peter 3:9 says: *"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promises as some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."*

We struggle with our thoughts and our emotions because we are sitting in the COVID-19 pandemic and there is so much distress around us. Sometimes our view of God makes the distress worse. We can't go to Him because we see Him as a distant God who doesn't answer prayers, who is angry, resentful and punishing. If we can understand that those things do happen, but not in the way we imagine them, then we will have much more peace. God has promised that we can have peace, a peace that surpasses all understanding, if we take our anxieties to the Lord. If you are still in a place where you feel angry with God because you don't understand His ways, then go and talk to Him. Tell Him like Jeremiah, "Lord I don't understand your ways. This is how I view You, help me." Jeremiah talked to the Lord and asked Him why the ways of the wicked prosper but God doesn't bless him? Talk to the Lord about these things. Philippians 4:6-7 tells us not to be anxious about anything. If you're anxious right now about what God is allowing in your life, the Bible tells you to go to the Lord with prayer and petition and with thanksgiving.

**SOMETIMES WE MAY FEEL THAT  
THE LORD IS NOT ANSWERING OUR  
PRAYERS, HE IS NOT COMING  
THROUGH FOR US.**

Present your request to the Lord, tell Him what you feel towards Him or your situation. The Bible gives us a beautiful promise from God. It says when you are anxious, go to the Lord and speak to Him honestly and openly and He will give you peace. Like the Bible characters; Mary, Martha, Jeremiah and many others, who expressed their disappointment and distress, tell Him what you need and what you want. God made the promise: *“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* Every single one of us are anxious from time to time and we desperately want this peace.

The Bible says a talk to God will bring peace of heart (*your emotions*) and peace of mind (*your thoughts*). Tell Him the things you are struggling with right now and that you cannot switch off and calm down. The Bible says that your situation might not change, God might not stop with the punishment, or the natural course of your negative choices may not end, but He will give you peace and understanding. It says: *“And the peace of God, that transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds.”* God is going to give you understanding in your mind and peace and calmness in your heart.

My prayer for you today is, if you have been in an odd place of not understanding God’s ways and not really getting Him, that this presentation may have helped you a little bit to see God from a different perspective and to understand that He is a parent who wants the best for you in every situation. Allow God to work in and through you to the best of His knowledge and His ability. Trust Him. When you feel you can’t trust Him and don’t see any light at the end of the tunnel, go to Him and tell Him what you don’t understand. Ask God to help you to understand so that you can have that peace that will guard your emotions and your mind.

ALLOW GOD TO WORK IN &  
THROUGH YOU TO THE BEST OF  
HIS KNOWLEDGE & HIS ABILITY.



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