

# Mad at God

I knelt down next to my bed, ten years old, and once more poured out my heart to God. “God, *please heal me!* You know how much I hate having polio, I hate limping, I hate going to physical therapy every week, I hate the surgeries, I hate the way people stare at me because of how I walk. I hate that no one could love me with polio. I hate this, God! I know You can take it away—please let me wake up tomorrow morning all healed and restored!” Once again, I fell asleep, hopeful that God had heard me and He was able to snap His fingers or wiggle His nose or however He did miracles. And in the morning, once again, I discovered that during the night *God had done absolutely nothing.*

And I was FURIOUS!

“You’re *God!* This is an easy one for You! What’s wrong with You that You won’t do something so easy as healing me???” Then, my little ten-year-old heart gasped, “I’m mad at God! People aren’t supposed to get mad at God!” And I gathered up my explosive anger and stuffed it into the emotional basement of my heart, along with all the other times I had begged God to heal me . . . and His silent inactivity kept saying no.

Once I trusted Christ as a college student, a wise woman saw my heart full of anger, bitterness and resentment, and prayed that God would show me my heart, knowing that my anger at God was a far bigger problem than legs that don’t work right. Remembering this ten-year-old memory, and the awareness there were a lot more just like it, was an answer to her prayer.

So I prayed, “God, I don’t have a clue what to do. My heart is full of anger, bitterness and resentment. I am angry at You, Lord, because You won’t give me what I want. I’ve never heard a message on ‘What to do when you’re so mad at God you want to spit in His face.’ Please show me what to do about it.”

God understands why we get angry at Him, just as a parent, possessing adult perspective, understands why a child gets angry at her. That adult understanding allows the parent to experience—and to show—grace toward a child tormented by angry confusion and a juvenile sense of entitlement to what he or she wants. Just as a child can't possibly see the big picture, much less a parent's motive and intention, that's why we get mad at God.

It's about what we can't see. And God understands.

He knows we cannot see anything but the pain and frustration of the moment. We can't see the reason(s) God is allowing us to suffer. We can't see the greater evil that a loving heavenly Father is preventing us from experiencing through the lesser evil of pain in that moment. Or season. We can't know what's going on the spirit realm, just as Balaam's donkey (Numbers 23) saw the angel of the Lord blocking their path with a sword but Balaam didn't, and he unrighteously punished the donkey.

We can't see the eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17) and beauty that God is creating in our souls through our pain and suffering, and He usually doesn't tell us. But He did tell my friend Ann. In prayer one day she had a body memory of being sexually assaulted by a man who had paid her father for the right to have access to his little girl. She asked Jesus about what felt like a heavy blanket over her during the abuse. He gave her a mental picture of Himself lying protectively on top of her, taking into Himself much of the violence of the assault. Ann saw that before the man could even touch her, he had to go through Jesus as her shield, protecting her from the worst of the assault. In answer to her heart's cry of "Why?", the Lord told her, "You are My precious gem. My Father's hand is on the chisel, creating unimaginable beauty in you. He has used every assault on you to create yet another facet of a brilliant jewel. I



promise, when you see yourself in heaven, you will say, 'It was totally worth it.'"

Now, I do realize that many people would gladly choose a less highly polished gem over the pain of abuse and suffering, but this was deeply encouraging to my wise and mature friend. I have watched God use her in mighty ways to minister hope and comfort to others in pain because of her willingness to relinquish her anger at what happened to her and trust God to bring good out of evil, to work all things together for good in her life (Rom. 8:28).

When I prayed, "God please show me what to do about my anger," He answered by teaching me about His sovereignty. I learned that a good and loving God is always in control, and nothing can touch me without His express permission. His perfect love and purpose for me—and His kingdom—is a shield around me (Ps. 28:7). By the time anything reaches me, whether it is a polio virus that crippled me for life or the disappointment of living in a fallen world, it has His fingerprints all over it. He taught me that all the available facts are not all the facts. He taught me that I can only see a tiny sliver of the whole picture that He sees, and I need to trust His goodness with what I don't see.

There's more to the story, but you can read that [here](#).

What do we do when we're so mad at God we want to spit in His face? Repent of the wrong belief that we see the whole picture, and choose to trust the God who sees everything and has a purpose in it.

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/mad\\_at\\_god](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/mad_at_god) on August 14,  
2013.

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# Unrealistic Expectations

Lots of things can keep us stuck in places that are hard to get out of.

Like harboring unrealistic expectations.

When my first son was four years old, I found myself angry and frustrated with him a lot. One day I “happened” to see a book on the inspirational display at the grocery store, *Overcoming Hurts and Anger*. I don’t remember anything else from that book except the wise counsel to adjust your unrealistic expectations. I realized that although my son was four, and a smart, prodigious four at that, it was still not fair to expect him to be and do things appropriate for a twelve-year old. It was amazing how much happier I was when I decided to expect four-year-old things of him!

Many people have unrealistic expectations of what growth and change should look like. The downside of our microwave culture is that we expect things to be fixed instantly. Last week a friend who is just starting out a long journey of overcoming a lot of hurts from her past asked what she could do to speed up the process. I suggested she work to build daily the always-popular habit of saying no to her flesh and yes to self-control, loving others, and doing the opposite of what comes naturally. Fifteen minutes later she texted me with a question: “I hate people today. Can I stay home from church?”

So much for the fast track!

One of the most dangerous places for our unrealistic expectations, though, is what we think God should do. Some of the most bitter and angry people I know, or who have loud voices in the culture (think of the [“new atheists”](#) like

Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris) are those who feel betrayed by God, so they decide He isn't there.

That sense of betrayal and disappointment comes from having expectations of God according to how we *think* He should act:

- Protect the innocent from pain and suffering
- Protect the people who maybe-aren't-so-innocent-but-not-as-bad-as-axe-murderers from pain and suffering
- Show the same grace to all of us by treating us all the same
- Give us an easy life
- If I do all the right things to be "a good person," God should do His part to make life work the way I want it to

When we pray fervently for what we want and He doesn't answer the way we want, many of us get angry with Him. That's a part of [my story](#). It's easy to decide God doesn't care, or He is evil, or He isn't there at all.

Many times, we pray in faith, believing God will give us what we ask for, but we ask for things He never promised in the first place. Or even worse, we "claim" them on the basis of a scriptural promise wrenched out of context, such as "all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22). Jesus never promised that if we believe *in our prayers*, we would receive what we ask for. *Believing* in the Bible is all about trusting in and surrendering to the goodness and character of GOD, not our prayer list. We will always receive an answer to our prayers because God is good. Sometimes the answer is "No, beloved," because we ask amiss. Psalm 84:11 promised, "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." If God says "no," it's because it's not a good thing *for us*. [His "no" is a "yes" to something else.](#) But because we have such a limited perspective, it is essential that we trust in the unlimited perspective of the God who sees everything.

When we feel disappointed in God, when we think, "God didn't

come through for me,” that’s the time to take a step back and ask, “What kind of unrealistic expectations did I have in the first place?” That may be a great question to talk through with a mature trusted friend who can see things more clearly. Then we can place the unrealistic part of our expectations into God’s hands as an act of worship and trust . . . and watch our anger and frustration subside.

I’ll share some thoughts about why those expectations of God are unrealistic in [my next blog post](#).

This blog post originally appeared at  
[blogs.bible.org/engage/sue\\_bohlin/unrealistic\\_expectations](https://blogs.bible.org/engage/sue_bohlin/unrealistic_expectations)  
on Oct. 11, 2010.

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## **“I Can’t Forgive God for Taking All Those People in the WTC!”**

I saw a distraught woman on the news asking, “Pray? Who do we pray to? God took all those people in the buildings !” It’s obvious there is so much hurt and a sense of betrayal toward God for allowing such a horrific thing to happen. I’m having a rough time forgiving God for allowing such terrible evil in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

I’m so glad you wrote.

A lot of people struggle with anger toward God when we experience pain or when bad things happen. (I completely understand, and carried anger toward Him for many years myself

for allowing me to get polio, and not healing me when I begged Him to. That story is [here](#).)

In his excellent book *I Should Forgive, But . . .* [1998, Nashville: Word Publishing, p. 143-157], Dr. Chuck Lynch addresses this issue. There are three problems with a perceived need to forgive God.

*1. It implies **an offense**. But God does not and can not sin against us. He does not morally offend us and does not need to be forgiven.*

*The number one complaint against God is that He failed to protect. We can be angry that He did not protect us, or He did not protect other innocent people. We believe a good God does not let bad things happen to good people. Bad things only happen to bad people. Therefore, if bad things happen to good people, God “did us dirty.” But we live in a fallen world; bad things happen to people, period. Our longing for a perfect world where nothing bad happens is a perfectly legitimate longing for the Eden we were created for, and God will re-create that perfect world in the future. . . but we don’t live there yet.*

*If God doesn’t “perform” as we think He should, we think He has offended us. The real failure is not with God’s performance, it’s with our misperception of His character.*

*We are upset when we realize that God knew the bad thing was going to happen and He didn’t stop it. Why not? Because He is graciously patient now, but His full wrath will be poured out on sin and unrighteousness at a later time.*

*Acts of nature such as weather tragedies, birth defects and diseases, as well as the consequences of things like terrorist attacks, are also perceived as offenses by God against man.*

*Many people believe it’s God’s job to keep their lives free*

from pain and loss, especially if they are faithful to Him. They fail to remember two things:

- God does not suspend the natural laws of nature for believers. He also does not violate the gift of free will to humanity, even when a person's choice means others will be hurt.
- While we have the promise that all pain and tears will be wiped away in heaven, this is earth.

2. It implies **accountability**. We demand to know the "WHY???" We think God owes it to us to explain why He does what He does, and why He allows the things that He does. And if He doesn't explain it to us [and often, if not usually, He doesn't], then many cut off fellowship with Him. "I'll show You, God, I won't believe in You anymore/I will live in rebellion/I will ignore You!"

God does not owe us an explanation. He is not accountable to us. He does as He pleases (Ps. 115:3), and He has the right to be the sovereign Lord without explaining to His creatures how his actions today, in time, fit into the big plan of eternity.

3. It implies **payment**. Somebody has to pay for sin. Jesus paid for our sins—but who's going to pay for God's "sins" against us?

Our anger against God is like a red light on a car's dashboard. It alerts us that something is wrong and we need to deal with what we're thinking and thus, what we're feeling. The red light tells us we need to grow into acceptance of our losses and adjust to them over time. When God allows bad things to happen, we get mad because of our loss and hurt. We don't need to forgive Him; we need to ask for grace to accept what He has allowed to happen.



God doesn't sin against us; He does things we don't like. He understands our anger the same way a parent understands a child's anger when the parent allows the doctor to give the child a shot. Just as a parent acts in the child's best interest, God is always acting in our best interests even in the midst of horrific evil and pain. He can do that because He is much bigger and more powerful than we can even begin to imagine.

God allows us to experience pain because His goal is our growth and maturity. He is in the process of developing a mature and solid Bride for His Son Jesus, and He knows that the best way for us to grow is often through pain. Even the Lord Jesus, although the Son of God, "learned obedience from what He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). God has a bigger plan than keeping us comfortable.

The real issue is to put aside the misconception that God needs to be forgiven, and move through to trust and acceptance.

I hope this helps.

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