

Understanding How God Feels About People: 7 Principles

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are exhorted to behold (or to think much on) the manner of love the Father has for us. This is practical because we love God more as we first understand His affections for us.
¹Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us... (1 Jn. 3:1)
¹⁹We love Him because [we understand that] He first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)
- B. God has different emotions related to how people respond to Him. Some live confused without knowing whether God is mad, sad or glad at them. We do not want to think God is mad when He is delighting over us, thus living in *condemnation*. Nor do we want to think He delights in us if He is grieved because of our compromise, thus living in *presumption*.
- C. We receive God's righteousness and favor because of what Jesus did not because of what we do.
¹⁷If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new...¹⁹not imputing their trespasses to them...²¹He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)
- D. Even though salvation is a gift, it is still necessary to repent sincerely to receive it. Repentance is a change of the attitude that turns *from sin* and *to God* according to the "light of understanding" that we have at each season in our spiritual journey.

II. FOUNDATIONAL PREMISE: SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY IS NOT REBELLION

- A. Spiritual immaturity is not the same as rebellion. At times they look the same outwardly, yet they come from very different heart responses. A sincere yet immature believer shows their sincerity by *quickly repenting* and renewing their war against the sin they just stumbled in.
- B. A genuine lover of God has a "willing spirit" because of sincerely seeking to obey Him. Our obedience and love for God are sincere even while they are weak and flawed. Weak love is not false love. The sincere *intention* to pursue full obedience is different from the *attainment* of it.
⁴¹The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (Mt. 26:41)
- C. David "seemed" to commit more serious sins than Saul, but God's favor continued with David. Why? When David sinned, his heart was wounded because he grieved God's heart. He cared more about his relationship with God than the consequences of getting caught by man. Saul gave an outward show of repentance while planning to continue in rebellion (1 Sam. 15:22-23).
- D. Sheep and swine both become stuck in the mud, but have different reactions to it. A hypocrite is not someone who fails, but one who says one thing and does not *seek* to obey it.

III. PRINCIPLE #1: GOD LOVES AND BLESSES UNBELIEVERS

- A. God *loves* unbelievers even when they rebel against Him and have no regard for Him.
¹⁶***God so loved the world that He gave His only...Son that whoever believes... (Jn. 3:16)***
- B. God *blesses* evil people. We are not to mistake His blessings on them as His approval of them.
⁴⁵***Makes His sun rise on the evil and the good...sends rain on the just and unjust. (Mt. 5:45)***

IV. PRINCIPLE #2: GOD ENJOYS SINCERE YET IMMATURE BELIEVERS

- A. The Father's affection for Jesus is the measure of His affection for us. Jesus gave this revelation of His love to help the apostles recover from betraying Him that night (Mt. 26:31). This is the ultimate statement of our worth. It gives all believers confidence to be "God's favorite."
⁹***As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide [live] in My love. (Jn. 15:9)***
- B. We are lovely to God even in our weakness. He is pleased with us from the moment we repent and reset the intention of our heart to obey. This work of God in us is the *beginning* of victory.
⁵***I am dark [in my heart], but lovely [to God because of Jesus]... (Song 1:5)***
- C. One reason Jesus enjoys us is because He has more gladness than any man in history. Joy fills His personality. Many think of God as being mostly mad or sad when they relate to Him.
⁹***Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions. (Heb. 1:9)***
- D. God *rejoices* over His people as they repent. This is long before we *attain* mature obedience.
⁴***What man...having a hundred sheep...does not leave the ninety-nine...and go after the one...? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing...⁶he calls together his friends...saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!" (Lk. 15:4-5)***
- E. God *enjoys* His prodigal children even in their weakness. His enjoyment is seen in immediately giving them the favor of the best robes (v. 22). This is before they mature in their areas of failure.
¹⁸***I will...say to him, "Father, I have sinned..." ²⁰He arose and came to his father. When he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him... ²²The father said, "Bring out the best robe and put it on him." (Lk. 15:18-22)***
- F. God *delights* in showing us mercy (Jer. 9:24). He wants us to run *to* Him instead of *from* Him.
¹⁸***He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)***
- G. God enjoyed David the day he repented after 16 months of compromise in Ziklag (1 Sam. 27-30).
¹⁹***He delivered me [David] because He delighted in me... (Ps. 18:19)***
- H. We can *stand with confidence* in His favor and have a new beginning by "pushing delete" after we sincerely repent. This is different from "pushing delete" on the process of emotional healing.
²²***His compassions fail not. ²³They are new every morning... (Lam. 3:22-23)***

V. PRINCIPLE #3: GOD’S LOVE IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS FULL APPROVAL

- A. God enjoying us does **not** mean that He *approves* all that we do or overlooks areas needing transformation. He loves us even when we need rebuking because of failure to repent in an area.
¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. (Rev. 3:19)
- B. God smiles over our life in a general sense, while He deals with *particular sins* in us. Several areas of immaturity *do not define our entire relationship with God*. We are defined by God’s passion for us, receiving the gift of righteousness, and by our heart’s cry to obey Jesus.
- C. God patiently suffers long with those He loves, to woo us to repent in areas of failure in our life.
⁴Love suffers long and is kind...⁷bears all things...endures all things. (1 Cor. 13:4-7)
⁴Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? (Rom. 2:4)
- D. We must not confuse His patience with His *approval*. He has *patience* for a season even when we refuse to fully respond to Him. Jesus gave Jezebel and her disciples in Thyatira time to repent.
²¹ I gave her (Jezebel) time to repent of her immorality... (Rev. 2:21)
- E. Our identity is as a genuine lover of God. Guilt says that our *actions* are wrong. Shame says we (our whole *personhood*) are wrong. **Question:** Are you a slave of sin who struggles to love God or a *lover of God who still struggles with sin*? Many define themselves by their failure. Because of Jesus, we are much better in God’s sight than the worst thing we have done.

VI. PRINCIPLE #4: GOD’S DISCIPLINE IS NOT THE SAME AS HIS REJECTION OF US

- A. God’s correction is not rejection. It is proof of His love. He delights in those He disciplines.
¹²Whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights. (Prov. 3:12)
- B. He corrects the areas that He disapproves of, so that He might remove all that hinders love in us.
¹⁰He [disciplines us] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. (Heb. 12:10)
- C. God does not discipline us to the degree we deserve nor does He change the way He feels about us.
*¹⁰He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities.
¹¹For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy. (Ps. 103:10-11)*
- D. To be disciplined means God cares and has not given up on us. It is a terrible thing to “get away with” sin long-term because that means God is giving that person over to their sin.
²⁴God gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts... (Rom. 1:24)
³²When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11:32)

VII. PRINCIPLE #5: GOD IS GRIEVED OVER THE PERSISTENT SIN OF HIS PEOPLE

- A. Jesus spoke of vomiting lukewarm believers out of His mouth. He does not despise them, nor has He lost interest in them or cast them away. He is grieved or heartsick with concern over them and what they were losing. He feels like vomiting (His stomach hurts) over their condition.
¹⁶*Because you are lukewarm...I will vomit you out of My mouth. (Rev. 3:16-17)*
³⁰*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. (Eph. 4:30)*
- B. God feels the pain of those He disciplines and continues to consider them as His dearly beloved.
⁷*I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. (Jer. 12:7)*
- C. God will manifest His jealousy over us as He requires our wholehearted love and obedience. He zealously insists on that which deepens our relationship with Him and results in our greatness.
⁵*Do you think the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit...in us yearns jealously”? (Jas 4:5)*
- D. When we neglect to thoroughly confront sin in our heart *we are not loved less by God* but we do *suffer loss* in several ways. We minimize our ability to experience the joy of our salvation, the spirit of revelation, God’s power, fellowship with God and others, and receiving eternal rewards.

VIII. PRINCIPLE #6: SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES DO NOT EARN US GOD’S FAVOR

- A. Spiritual disciplines—prayer, fasting, meditation, etc.—are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace. These activities do not *earn* us God’s favor. The power is in the “bonfire of God’s presence,” not in our cold hearts positioned before it.
- B. God gives to our heart on the basis of how much we hunger for relationship with Him, not on how much He loves us (Mt. 5:6). God honors the value we put on the relationship by giving us more according to our spiritual hunger, but He *does not love us more*. He will not enjoy an obedient believer more in a billion years than He does now (Mal. 3:6).

IX. PRINCIPLE #7: MATURITY ALLOWS US TO RECEIVE MORE (NOT BE LOVED MORE)

- A. God loves us all yet He entrusts *a greater measure of power* to the mature. He determines the measure of power that He has planned for each to walk in. This measure is different for each believer (Mt. 25:15). Our obedience positions us to walk in whatever that full measure is.
- B. People with greater power in ministry or influence in business are not loved more by God. He will entrust more to us as we mature because it will not damage us or others. The gifts of the Spirit are given to us by faith (Acts 3:11-12; Gal. 3:5). They are not earned by our discipline. However, our spiritual maturity provides added protection from the counterattack of Satan (Lk. 14:30-32) on those operating in the anointing. Four things increase as we experience more of the Holy Spirit’s power (God’s zeal, Satan’s rage, man’s demands, our emotional capacities).