

LAWS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Part 1: God is God, and we're not

If you want to be good at something, you have to understand the principles that make that thing work. For example, when the men went to Danny's baseball facility, Danny showed us how we should hold the bat and how we should swing at the ball. Anybody can hold the bat and swing it, but if you're going to be good at it, you have to know the right principles. The same is true with writing. Anyone can write, but there are certain principles that you must know if you're going to be a good writer. The same is true with the Christian life. Anyone can go through the motions, but if you want to be successful in living for God, there are certain principles that you must know and live by. I am beginning a new series on Laws for Spiritual Growth. The first law that we will see today is, "God is God, and we're not." You might wonder why I would even take the time to say that because none of us believe that we are God. We don't believe that we are literally God, but the problem is that we sometimes act like we are. From the very beginning of creation, Satan's ploy to deceive people was to say, "You shall be as God." And he's been saying that ever since. We may not believe that we are literally God, but we sure like to sit on his throne and act like we are when it comes to making decisions in our lives. So, for the next few weeks, we will be looking at some of the basic principles that every believer needs to know in order to have a healthy relationship with God.

BECAUSE GOD IS GOD-HIS PERSON

1. GOD IS BEYOND OUR UNDERSTANDING

Imagine David as a teenage boy out in the fields watching his father's sheep. As night falls, he lies down on the grass, looks up into the starry heavens and is amazed at the work of God that he sees. Then he writes the words of psalm 8.

Psalm 8:1 "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

The first word "LORD" is the name Yahweh, which was the unspoken name of God, and means "the self-existent one." The second use of "Lord" is the name Adonai and is a title that reflects that He is master of everything.

God's name is "majestic" in all the earth. This means He is excellent and famous in the earth. There is no one else like Him

Exodus 15:11: "Who among the Gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?"

Thomas Aquinas, the famous theologian, created one of the greatest intellectual achievements of western civilization in his Summa Theological. It is a massive work with 3,000 articles. Thomas tried together into one book all of the truth of God. On December 6, 1273, Thomas abruptly stopped his work. It is said that he caught a glimpse of eternity, and suddenly he knew that all his efforts to describe God feel so far short but he decided never to write again. When his secretary, Reginald, tried to encourage him to do more writing, he said, "Reginald, I can do no more. Such things have been revealed to me that all I have written it seems as so much straw." Even the greatest human minds cannot fathom the greatness of God.

2. GOD IS THE UNCHANGING REALITY BEHIND ALL LIFE

In the science fiction movie, The Matrix, the real world has been taken over by computers that keep humans in bondage by creating a false reality in their minds. The computers electronically feed a virtual reality into their brain. The humans think they are free, but they are actually entombed ...

What is reality? Philip K. Dick "Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." Reality is that I only feel bad twice a day, morning and night.

What is the underlying foundation that makes life what it is? There is no way to really understand life unless you see it from the backdrop of God. That's where Moses starts.

Psalm 90:1 A prayer of Moses the man of God. Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

When Moses wanted to describe the eternality of God, he illustrated that concept by some of the most permanent objects he could imagine—the mountains. As Moses had led the Israelites through those many years in the desert, the mountains stood around them as great immovable giants that seemed to have been there forever. Generations of people could be born and die, but the mountains seemed to remain the same, year after year. Thinking about those great objects, Moses said, "Lord, you were there before the mountains." In fact, you were there before the world was born— "from everlasting to everlasting you are God."

If we could picture what Moses is saying, we would see ages of time in eternity past, each one consisting of what we would know of today as billions upon billions of years. As those ages flowed from one to another before the creation of the world, there existed God in all of His splendor and glory. We have another illustration in

Psalm 90:2, "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night."

Time seems to be relative to how long you have lived. When you're 5 years old, one year seems like a long time. When you are in the 7th grade, graduation in 5 years seems like a long time. The older you get, the shorter a year seems to be. What then would 1,000 years seem like to someone who has lived forever? Moses illustrates that answer by saying 1000 years are to the Lord like a "watch in the night" (a watch was about 4 hours).

The point is, if you were able to go as far back as history would allow, you would find God. If you could go into the future as far as possible, God would be there. And in both cases, whether in the beginning or end of history, God would be just as He is today because He never changes. He is the unchanging reality behind all life.

3. GOD IS THE REASON AND SOURCE OF ALL THINGS

Isaiah 40:26, "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who has created these things, who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, by the greatness of His might and the strength of His power; not one is missing."

Frank Borman was commander of Apollo 8 and had the thrill of looking down on the earth from 250,000 miles away. He radioed a message, in which he and his fellow astronauts took turns quoting the opening verses of Genesis 1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..."

He later explained, "I had an enormous feeling that there had to be a power greater than any of us, that there was a God, that there was indeed a beginning."

John Glenn said after his return to outer space, "To look out at this kind of creation and not believe in God is to me impossible. It just strengthens my faith."

Awesomeness of God (SERMON SPICE) LENGTH 3:05

God is far bigger than we imagine. His presence fills the universe. He is more powerful than we know, wiser than all the wisdom of the wisest men and women. His love is beyond human understanding, and his grace has no limits. He is the one true God with no beginning and no end. He rules all things everywhere at all times. Nothing escapes his notice. Nothing is beyond his control.

4. GOD IS FREE TO DO ANYTHING THAT HE WANTS TO DO

Because God is God, he can do whatever he wants to do whenever he wants to do it. If he wants to create a planet, or a galaxy, or even another universe, he just says the word and it happens. He is truly "free" in the absolute sense of the term.

"But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases" (Job 23:13).

"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted" (Job 42:2).

"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him" (Psalm 115:3).

That's pretty clear, isn't it? The Lord of the universe does whatever he pleases. Whenever I read this verse, I want to stop and say, "Any questions?"

"The LORD does whatever pleases him, in the heavens and on the earth, in the seas and all their depths" (Psalm 135:6).

God has the right to deal with us any way he chooses. God was under no obligation to create you or me or anyone else. And he is under no obligation to keep us alive even one more second. He is under no compulsion to save a single member of the human race. No one has a claim on God. He can do what he wants with any of us and no one can successfully second-guess him.

God doesn't have to deal with you the way he deals with another person in our church. He doesn't have to work in your life the way He does in the life of your next-door neighbor. God treats us as individuals, not as groups. The truth is, he might do for you exactly what he's done for someone else, or he might do more or he might do less. He's God. He can deal with us the way he wants. He is not obligated to live up to your expectations or to explain himself to you.

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God" (Deuteronomy 29:29).

BECAUSE GOD IS GOD-MY RESPONSE TO GOD

1. I MUST CONFESS MY TOTAL NEED OF HIM

Many times we feel very inadequate for the things we know we should do in life. That's okay because God is God and you are not. Confess your utter and complete need for God's help. If you know that you can't possibly do without Him, that's a good thing. You'll never know if Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have. When Jesus is all you have, then you will know that Jesus is all you need.

2. I MUST MAKE HIM LORD OF MY LIFE

Years ago, there was a bumper sticker out that said, "God is my Co-Pilot." That is an interesting statement. God is not the pilot; he is my co-pilot. What that means is that if I ever get too weary to direct my life, I may choose to let God fly the plane for a little while until I recuperate. God does not want to be your co-pilot. Neither does he want to be your senior partner. God wants you to see him for who he is—your creator and king.

3. I MUST LIVE A LIFE OF WORSHIP

It is common knowledge for every religion on the planet that they are to worship their Gods. Worship is focusing your attention on God and loving and adoring Him. It is coming before Him with thanksgiving and praising Him for who He is and for what He has done.

Worship is more than just sitting through a church service. It is being caught up in a sense of awe and wonder at how great this God is. It is realizing that we are in the presence of Someone who is greater than our greatest imaginations, and our heart is filled with reverence. Reverence in God's presence is like the all-consuming experience you have when a loved one dies. Life's wheels come to a sudden stop, and all the things you normally consider so important in life fade away. That's the kind of focus you have on God when you worship Him. But it is not a focus of grief, such as in death. It is a focus of joy. It is the kind of awe and joy you experience when a new baby is born. This is not your normal, every-day thing. It is awesome.

When Moses met with God in the desert, God said to Him in

Exodus 3, Do not come any closer... "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

There was nothing intrinsically holy about the ground Moses was standing on. There was no shrine or temple there. It was plain old dirt, but in the presence of God, it was transformed into something holy. Holiness doesn't depend on the condition of the place. Holiness depends on the presence of God. And to show his total helplessness and submission to this holy God, he took off His sandals. God is God and Moses is not. God is God and we are not. When we meet here every Sunday, there is nothing holy about this building. What makes it holy is the presence of God. As you drive to work each day, your car can become a holy place as you spend time in the presence of God in prayer. The couch you sit on in your home can become a holy place if you are spending time with God. It is because God is God and we are not that we seek to live a life of worship.

4. I MUST LIVE MY LIFE FOR HIS PURPOSE

The following conversation occurred between a canary in a cage and a lark on a windowsill. The lark looked in at the canary and asked,

“What is your purpose?”
“My purpose is to eat seed.”
“What for?”
“so I can be strong.”
“What for?”
“So I can sing,” answered the canary.
“What for?” Continued the lark.
“Because when I sing, I get more seed.”
“So you eat in order to be strong so you can sing and get more seed so you can eat?”
“yes.”
“There’s more to you than that,” the lark said.
“If you will follow me, I will help you to find it, but you must leave your cage.”

We’re so much like that canary in the cage. We work so we can eat, and we eat so we can work. We go through life doing the mundane tasks that we must do to survive, not realizing that there is a higher purpose for our lives.

You are not alive on this planet just to survive. God has you here for a purpose and discovering and living out that purpose is the most important thing you can do. "There are two great moments in a person's life: the moment you were born and the moment you realize *why* you were born." If God is God, and we’re not, then we must find his purpose for our lives and of the purpose for his Glory.

5. I MUST TRUST HIM WHEN I GO THROUGH THE DARK VALLEYS OF LIFE

On May 17, 2008, Christian recording artist Steven Curtis Chapman and his family suffered a devastating loss. Five-year-old adopted daughter, Maria, was struck and killed when Chapman's seventeen-year-old son was backing his SUV out of the family's driveway. After much prayer and counsel, Chapman recently returned to touring in promotion for his newest album. Elizabeth Diffin, a freelance reporter, attended one of Chapman's concerts and writes about the experience:

It's not often you leave a concert reflecting on the words of a song by a different artist. But as I exited the July 24, 2008, Steven Curtis Chapman event, the words of a Matt Redman worship song echoed through my head. Chapman opened the concert with "Blessed Be Your Name" just two months after the death of his 5-year-old daughter, Maria Sue, in a tragic accident at the family's home.

"Blessed Be Your Name" was also the first song Chapman sang May 21, the day of Maria's death, when he wasn't sure he'd ever be able to sing again. Inspired by the story of Job, at one point the lyrics repeat, "He gives and takes away."

"As I sang this song ... it wasn't a song, it was a cry, a scream, a prayer," Chapman explained to the audience of nearly 5,000. "I found an amazing comfort and peace that surpasses all understanding."

Fellowship Bible Church

Pastor: Don Griffin

Chapman also shared that after Maria's death, he'd reconsidered the words to all his songs and whether he could still sing—and believe—them. Instead, losing his little girl brought the meaning of some of those songs into sharper focus. One example was "Yours," which addresses how everything in the world belongs to God.

"In this song, in particular, I had to come to a new realization," he said. "There's not an inch of creation that God doesn't look at and say 'all of that's mine.'"

As a result of that realization in conjunction with Maria's death, Chapman added a new verse to "Yours":

I've walked the valley of death's shadow so deep and dark that I could barely breath.
I've had to let go of more than I could bear and I've questioned everything that I believe.
Still even here in this great darkness a comfort and a hope comes breaking through as I
can say in life or death God we belong to you.

One of the most important things you can do is to accept the first law-God is God, and we are not. Living in submission to that truth is a decision we have to make every day of our lives. We can reject it and live in anger, or we can submit to it and live with peace and joy.