

My Concept of God

by Brad Miller

As a child, I was taught that God loved me because He sent Jesus to die for my sins, and I, in turn, believed that He raised Jesus from the dead; therefore, I was saved. I was safe from God's fury. I was one of His beloved. I believed that I was special. I knew something that the heathen didn't know. I was a member of the club. I was in. I knew the secret handshake. In fact, inside the world of Christendom, I believed that my church had a better understanding of God's overall plan. The rest of them were misguided. If they only knew what I knew they would bow at our proverbial feet and drink from the fountain of our revealed knowledge. I was so lucky. God had chosen *me*.

Then life happened.

After finding recovery and "New Thought," I easily let go of my old beliefs in sacrifice and redemption. Then, hearing the stories of how others had perceived their God as a stern judge, I felt fortunate that in my childhood I had known God loved me. I said something like, "Whew, I'm so glad I don't have to re-invent my Higher Power; I have one that works just fine." So, early on, I didn't look or examine my own concepts of God. I thought this was one of the areas that I didn't need to learn anything new. Case closed.

One of the results of that mistaken belief became manifest in a strange way. I transferred the idea that my religion had a better understanding of God's plan to the belief that now it existed in my newfound recovery community. As time went on, I discovered *A Course in Miracles* and Fellowship for Today and, yet again, I transferred that same idea to my new spiritual community with a twist. Now, instead of believing that my religion was the only way to God/Heaven, I believed that my belief in tolerance was the better, more enlightened, way — that someday the world will awaken from its dream and see that "we" had been right all along. Of course, I thought it was okay for others to believe differently, but still harbored the belief that I had found the "enlightened" path, and others were sadly mistaken (but not damned.) Somehow, that doesn't

quite work. I still have the same old concept of a God who likes some of us more than others. When I think I'm more enlightened than someone else, I am *still* perpetuating the idea of a God of "special-ness."

Joyfully, I see a change in my thinking. I am beginning to understand that we are all the one Child of God. Therefore, if I think God loves me but doesn't love "them," then I really don't think God loves me. I have begun to come to grips with my own self-hatred buried in the idea that I am special to God.

How could I even consider a God who has favorites? I am beginning to see that there are no requirements to receive the Love of God. There are no beliefs required, no actions to be taken, and no behaviors to be avoided that will make God love us. I am beginning to see that God's love always has been and always will be, regardless of what I think or feel.

I realized while doing this article that I can't tell you what my concepts of God are. However, I can tell you that I am no longer afraid of not knowing what God is. I realize that it doesn't matter what I think about God. My thoughts or ideas won't change the Truth. It may change my perceptions — but the Truth remains.

I am more and more convinced that I will never fully know what God is. That state of "not knowing" allows me to be teachable and remain willing to listen to what others have discovered about God. The "not knowing" provides me the freedom to continue to see God in new, and life-changing ways. I'm beginning to see that all I need to do is remove the blocks, with the help of my Guide, to an ever-expanding awareness of a God who can't be boxed into my conceptions.

God doesn't need me to do or believe in anything to be loved by Him. What a relief! ■



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