

GOD
IS **NOT**
MAD
AT **YOU**

GOD
IS **NOT**
MAD
AT YOU

You Can Experience Real Love,
Acceptance & Guilt-free Living

JOYCE MEYER



NEW YORK • BOSTON • NASHVILLE

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INTRODUCTION

One day I put a post on Facebook that simply said, “God’s not mad at you,” and the response we received at the ministry was overwhelming. In just a few hours, thousands of people responded favorably. Many of them said, “That is exactly what I needed to hear today.” They obviously were people who were afraid that God was mad at them and desperately needed to be assured that He wasn’t.

Through my own experience in my relationship with God, and through ministering to other people, I have come to believe that a large percentage of people, either vaguely or perhaps even clearly, believe that God is mad at them. This belief prevents us from receiving His love, mercy, grace and forgiveness. It leaves us fearful, lacking confidence and feeling guilty. Even though we may ask for God’s forgiveness for our sins and failures, we often still feel that God is disappointed and angry because we are less than He wants and expects us to be.

Where does this concept of God come from? Perhaps from an angry parent who was difficult to please. Or the pain of rejection from parents or friends who did not know how to give unconditional love. Perhaps it came from church! From religious teaching that offered us rules and regulations to follow, and implied that we would be unacceptable to God if we did not follow them. We wanted to be good, we tried to be good, but when we discovered—as everyone does—that we constantly fail, we silently accepted the message that we were a major

disappointment to God, deserving of His anger. We did however, continue to try to change and behave better because we love God, and we definitely don't want Him to be angry with us.

In this condition we are faced with a lifetime of disappointment because anyone who attempts to serve God under the law (rules and regulations) is doomed to disappointment according to the apostle Paul:

And all who depend on the Law [who are seeking to be justified by obedience to the Law of rituals] are under a curse and doomed to disappointment.

Galatians 3:10

In our relationships with our parents or other people, we may have had to perform in a certain way in order to earn their love, but God's love is unconditional, and is freely offered to all who will receive it by faith.

You will learn in this book that although God does get angry at sin, wickedness and evil, He is not an angry God. God hates sin, but He loves sinners! He is "good, and ready to forgive [our trespasses, sending them away, letting them go completely and forever]." He is abundant in mercy and filled with loving-kindness (Psalm 86:5). Let me be clear: God does not and never will approve of sin, but He does love sinners and will continue to work with us toward positive change in our lives. God never stops loving us for even one second of our lives, and it is because of His great love that He refuses to leave us alone, lost and abandoned in sin. He meets us where we are and helps us get to where we need to be.

The Bible is a record of sin, deceit, immorality of every kind, disobedience, hypocrisy and God's amazing grace and love. The heroes we admire were people just like us. They failed miserably at times,

they sinned regularly, and yet they found love, acceptance, forgiveness and mercy to be the free gifts of God. His love drew them into intimate relationship with Him, empowered them to do great things, and taught them to enjoy the life that He has provided.

Since they experienced that acceptance, I believe we can experience it, too, if we will make a decision to believe what God's Word says to us instead of what we think, feel or hear from others. We should make sure that our beliefs are in agreement with God's Word, and not merely a fabrication of misled thinking. One might believe that God does not love him and is angry with him, but that is not what God's Word says; therefore, the wrong thinking should be rejected as a counterfeit, and what God says should be accepted by faith without question. God has given us His Word that we might always have the truth available to us. It is impossible for us to live a life of deception if we make God's Word our source of all truth and believe it above all else.

You may think, "There is absolutely no reason for God to love me," and you are absolutely right. But God does love you. He chooses to do so, and because He is God, He has every right to do so. The Bible says that He planned to love us and to adopt us as His own children because it was His will, it pleased Him, and was His kind intent (Ephesians 1:5). God loves us because He wants to, not because we deserve it. I would like to suggest that you stop reading for a few minutes and repeat out loud several times, "God loves me because He wants to, not because I deserve it." Each time you say it, take a moment and let it sink into your consciousness. Being conscious and aware of God's love is the beginning of all healing and restoration. It is the source of all righteousness, peace and joy. We should learn to be God-conscious instead of sin-conscious. Focus on God's goodness instead of our failures. Focusing on our weaknesses only gives them more strength and power over us.

To live in the reality that God is not mad at us is the most freeing truth that we will ever find. Knowing that we will sin, probably every day, and that God knows that and has already decided to forgive us eliminates the fear of failure. The beautiful truth is that when we no longer focus on our sin, we find that we do it less and less. As we focus on God's goodness instead of being afraid of our weaknesses, we become more and more like Jesus. God, in Christ, has totally taken care of the problem of sin. To be sure, God commands us not to sin, but He knew that we would due to the weakness of our flesh, so He took care of the problem by sending us His Son Jesus as the sacrifice and payment for our sins. Jesus paid for everything that we have done or ever will do wrong, and He opened up a new way for us to live and serve God. Not in fear or guilt, but in freedom, love and intimacy.

God is determined to have intimate relationship with each of us, and the only way He can do that is if He extends grace, mercy and forgiveness to us continually. The only way we can have that relationship with Him is if we learn to continually receive His grace, forgiveness and mercy.

In case you are wondering, you have not already received too much mercy in your life. There is still an abundant amount available to you, and there will be as long as you live. God's mercy is new every day! It is a gift and can only be enjoyed if it is received freely.

As you read this book, I pray that you will receive God's grace, favor, love, mercy, forgiveness and the glorious truth that God's not mad at you! May you live boldly and be all God intends you to be, and live in the fullness of the joy and beauty that you were created for. Form the habit of meditating on and confessing this truth: "God is not mad at me."

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CHAPTER 1

Is God Angry?

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plentiful in mercy and loving-kindness.

He will not always chide or be contending, neither will He keep His anger forever or hold a grudge.

Psalm 103:8–9

A woman I know tells a story about the time she burnt out the engine of her father's car, which he had loaned her when she was in college. It was the end of semester break, and she was going to head back to school on the bus, a seven-hour ride with a lot of stops on the way. Ellen had been given a lot of Christmas gifts that were bulky, including a down-filled comforter and a new desktop computer. Her dad told her that rather than deal with so many big items on the bus, she could drive his car back to school and return it the next time she came home for a visit. What a gift!

The trip back to college was a breeze. Ellen parked the car in a safe spot and planned to drive home and return it within a few weeks. In the meantime, every now and then she'd drive to the grocery store or the mall. Pretty soon, she was taking her friends on short trips here and there just for fun.

On one of those trips, Ellen noticed a red light blinking on the dashboard. She didn't think it was anything serious; after all, her

father took great care of the car and it was in good condition. She just kept driving.

Soon she noticed some smoke coming out of the hood and decided she'd better get the car back to campus. Next came a few loud sputters, and then the engine died. When the tow-truck driver arrived, it didn't take him long to figure out the problem: That red light on the dash was an oil indicator. Ellen had neglected to check out the light, and now the engine was beyond repair.

A few days later, when her father arrived (in his remaining car) and she met him at the gas station where the car had been towed, Ellen was terrified. She had abused a privilege and ignored a simple warning. There was no excuse for her neglect, and now she'd destroyed her father's car. She knew he was furious, and there was no defense for her behavior. Ellen told her father how sorry she was for her carelessness, but he just told her to sit in the car while he assessed the damage.

After learning that the car was now worthless, Ellen's father arranged for the gas station to dispose of it. He actually had to pay them to take it off his hands! Now it was time for Ellen to face his wrath.

As they drove away from the trashed car, her father asked Ellen, "Where's the best restaurant in town?" That was the last thing she'd expected to hear, but she directed him to it. As they sat at the table and looked at the menu, Ellen couldn't think about food. Fortunately, her father ordered for both of them: broiled trout almondine. They sat in silence while they waited for their food, every minute feeling like an hour.

When the trout arrived, Ellen's father said to her, "Tonight I want to teach you a lesson that you'll never forget." She knew she deserved whatever she got. Would he make her pay him for the

car? That would take forever. Would he yell at her? Maybe he would just tell her how disappointed he was in her. In some ways, that would be the worst punishment.

Then he took his knife and fork in hand and said, “I’m going to teach you how to remove the skeleton from cooked trout.” Not a word was said about the car that night—or ever again.

Ellen’s father had been angry about her behavior—who wouldn’t be? But he also knew that Ellen had learned her lesson without retribution from him. Ellen is nearly sixty now, and her father died many years ago. But she tells this story as if it happened last week, and she is still in awe of her father’s forgiveness. His grace made a greater impact on her than his punishment ever would have.

God’s Word says that He behaves the same way toward us that Ellen’s father did toward her.

The Lord your God is in the midst of you, a Mighty One, a Savior [Who saves]! He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest [in silent satisfaction] and in His love He will be silent and make no mention [of past sins, or even recall them]; He will exult over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

To be sure, there are many examples in the Bible of our heavenly Father getting angry, but that does not mean that He is an angry God. He does at times get angry at sin, disobedience and rebellion. But He is slow to anger, abundant in mercy and always ready to forgive. All of our sins—past, present and future—have already been forgiven. This took place when Jesus died on the cross. All we need to do is believe it and receive it any time we fail. Ask and receive that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

Don't make the mistake of spending your life believing that God is mad at you, when the forgiveness you need is available at all times. Speak freely with God about your sins. He already knows all about them, but bringing them out into the open and letting nothing remain hidden between you and God is very liberating. It is awesome to realize that we can talk freely to God about absolutely anything and that He understands and does not judge us. That doesn't mean that He approves of sinful behavior, but He does understand the weakness in our flesh (Hebrews 4:15–16), and His power enables us to overcome it.

There are many instances recorded in the Bible of God's anger blazing against the Israelites because of their complaining, disobedience, and worship of idols and false gods. But the amazing thing to me is how quick God was to completely forgive them and restore all of His benefits to them as soon as they turned away from their wickedness and back to Him.

This happened over and over again throughout the Old Testament. It is truly astonishing how often Israel served God and enjoyed His abundant blessings and then turned away in rebellion and disobedience to worship idols and to please their own selves. It is even more astonishing how quickly and freely God took them back, forgave them and restored them to their former prosperity when they turned back to Him with sincere and repentant hearts. It is very evident from the history of these people, who were God's chosen ones, that He is faithful and always ready to forgive and restore.

Perhaps you think that God is angry with you. Surely, if God was quick to forgive people who turned entirely away from Him and worshipped idols, He is more than ready to forgive you and me for our sins.

As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe].

For He knows our frame, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust.

Psalm 103:12–14

We are reminded in these Scripture verses that God understands our weaknesses. He knows that we will at times succumb to temptations and wrong behavior, but He is also a compassionate, loving Father who stands ready to forgive everything. The very fact that we cannot do everything right is why God sent Jesus to pay the price for our redemption.

Hosea Marries a Harlot

The story of the prophet Hosea is an extraordinary picture of God's amazing love and deep commitment to the children of Israel. God commanded Hosea to marry a harlot named Gomer and to have children with her. This was intended to be a living example to the Israelites of God's faithfulness in the face of their unfaithfulness.

Hosea and Gomer had three children who were named by God. Their names were prophetic. In other words, they were intended to be a message for the children of Israel. The first was named Jezreel, which signified God's judgment on the ruling king Jeroboam. The second was named Lo-Ruhamah, meaning "not pitied," which conveyed the message that God was about to withdraw His mercy from Israel. The third child was named Lo-Ammi

and it meant “Not-my-people.” The names of these children were a prophetic reminder to Israel that God was displeased with their unfaithfulness.

Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea, and her infidelity was a symbol of Israel’s unfaithfulness to her covenant relationship with God. Instead of responding to God’s goodness with love and gratitude, the Israelites used the crops God had blessed them with as offerings to idols. They were unfaithful to God just as Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea.

Even though Gomer was unfaithful to Hosea, God commanded him to take her back again and love her.

Then said the Lord to me, Go again, love [the same] woman [Gomer] who is beloved of a paramour and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins [used in the sacrificial feasts in idol worship].

Hosea 3:1

This was intended to show God’s commitment and everlasting love for His people. Although God was angry at the Israelites for their amazingly stupid behavior, He never stopped loving them. He intended to deal with them in a way that would eventually draw them back to Him. So we see that even in our sin, God devises ways to draw us back into a loving relationship with Him. God is not ever going to give up on us!

Therefore return to your God! Hold fast to love and mercy, to righteousness and justice, and wait [expectantly] for your God continually!

Hosea 12:6

All God required in order to restore the Israelites' relationship with Him was for them to return to Him and repent of their iniquity. He wanted them to be sorry for what they had done, turn away from their sin and turn back to Him.

If you have served God at some time and walked away from Him to have an affair with the world, surely this story gives you hope that God is waiting with open arms to receive you back. Yes, God does get angry, but His nature is to forgive and restore.

God's Anger Is Different from Ours

When we get angry with people, it is usually because they did something to us that we don't like, or they didn't do something we believe they should have. Our anger is always due to someone hurting us. When God gets angry, it is not because of what we are doing to Him. It is because of what we are doing to ourselves by not following His ways. You might even say that His anger is for us, not against us. God's love is everlasting, and even His anger and displeasure are intended to drive us away from sin and back to Him.

Although we often resist God's commandments because we think they are hard to follow or will prevent us from doing what we want to do, we are wrong. Everything that God commands us to do—or not to do—is for our good. Our obedience to Him will give us the life we truly desire. The Bible is a record of how blessed people are when they follow God, and how miserable and wretched they are when they don't. God said it very simply in His Word:

*If you will listen diligently to the voice of the Lord your God,
being watchful to do all His commandments which I command*

you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth.

And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 28:1–2

We don't need to chase blessings, because they will chase us if we will simply do what God asks us to do. Most people are so busy chasing blessings and trying to obtain what they think they want out of life that they fail to obey God. Their actions are counterproductive and will never produce the result they desire. If we will put God first in our lives, He will add all the things we need and desire (Matthew 6:33).

But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God, being watchful to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.

Deuteronomy 28:15

In the Scriptures above we see the law of sowing and reaping in operation. Follow God and reap good things; rebel against God and reap a harvest of bad things. The extraordinary, good news, though, is that if you have sown bad seed (disobedience), you need not be afraid, because all you need to do is begin sowing good seed (obedience) and you will see God's goodness in your life.

I know a young man who is eighteen years old, who was raised in a good Christian home, but has chosen to go his own way and do every wrong thing that he can possibly do. It almost seems that he is bent on self-destruction but is oblivious to what he is doing.

His parents are not angry with him; they are sad for him. They are angry at the evil that has persuaded him to go in the wrong direction, but they are praying and waiting for his return to God and to them. With a few sincere words of repentance from him, they will receive him back without reproach or condemnation. If a parent can do that, how much more can our perfect God do it!

You don't have to live in fear that God is mad at you! Look away from your sinful behavior and look to God instead.

A Bigger Problem Than Sin?

I think Scripture proves that our unbelief is a much larger problem than our sins. Sin can always be forgiven for those who will repent and believe, but when unbelief exists, God's hands are tied when it comes to helping us.

The Word of God teaches that it will be done to us according to how we believe. In other words, when I believe that God is angry with me because of my imperfections, no matter how much He loves me and wants to forgive and restore me, I will not receive it because I don't believe it.

Our unbelief is a tragedy when it comes to God's good plan for our lives. He longs for us to believe Him, to come to Him with simple childlike faith and trust what He says to us in His Word.

God called Moses to bring deliverance to His people. It was actually something that Moses had longed for, yet when God finally said the time had come for Moses to act, he refused to believe that he could do what God was asking him to do. Moses made one excuse after another until finally the Bible records that God's anger "blazed against Moses" (Exodus 4:14).

Simply put, God got angry because Moses would not believe! He eventually did obey God, and of course God was faithful.

We learn from the apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews that the Israelites were never allowed to enter God's rest as they traveled through the wilderness due to their hardness of heart and refusal to believe His promises. Unbelief makes us miserable and steals every blessing that God desires for us. It also makes God angry. He so much wants us to be blessed in every way that when we do things that prevent His blessings, it makes Him angry. It is a holy anger, not a selfish anger as we experience in our humanity. It is important for us to remember that God's anger is directed toward our sinful behavior rather than toward us. I may hate something one of my children does, but I always love my child.

If you feel guilty right now and are afraid that God is mad at you, then you are miserable. But your misery can be immediately changed to peace and joy by simply believing God's Word. Believe that God loves you and that He is ready to show you mercy and forgive you completely. Believe that God has a good plan for your life. Believe that God is not mad at you!

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God

Jonathan Edwards, one of the greatest preachers the world has ever known, delivered a sermon entitled *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. It is considered by many to be the most famous sermon ever preached. The response from those who heard the message was nothing short of amazing. They often cried out during Edwards's preaching, asking how they might be spared, and flocked to the altar for salvation. It was a frightening message about God's anger at sin and the dangers of being sent to Hell.

I don't mean what I am about to say as a criticism of Edwards' message, because it is evident that God used it in a mighty way. But I do wonder why people respond to God's anger more quickly

than they do to His love and mercy. To be honest, it makes me sad. I would much rather my children respond to my love than to a threat of punishment if they don't obey me, and I am sure you are the same way with your children. I can't help but believe that God is the same way with His children. Surely, He doesn't want to have to frighten us into obedience through threats of our ending up in Hell. It may work in the lives of some people, and I suppose it is better than nothing, but I cannot believe it is God's preferred method of dealing with us.

I also wonder if people who are frightened into repentance by the thought of eternal punishment continue with God, or if some perhaps go back to their old ways. I doubt that a good relationship can be built on fear.

Love is stronger than fear, and if we respond to God's love, it will cast out all of our fears. We can respond obediently to God because we know He loves us rather than because we are afraid of punishment.

There is no fear in love [dread does not exist], but full-grown (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For fear brings with it the thought of punishment, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the full maturity of love [is not yet grown into love's complete perfection].

1 John 4:18

I wasted many years living with a vague fear that God was angry with me, and it wasn't until I received His love by faith that I was released from that burden. I believed that God loved me in some sort of general, impersonal way, but I did not know the fierce, fiery, all-consuming love that God has for His children.

Fortunately, over the years I have come to know that amazing, passionate love, and it has truly delivered me. I now know that God is not angry with me; He isn't even annoyed with me! And it isn't because of my wonderful self; it is simply because He's in love with me. I'm no longer afraid to face Him just as I am.

God wants to do the same thing for you, and you need not fear His anger even another moment. God loves you perfectly and unconditionally *right now!* Believe it, receive it and let it deliver you from all fear.

I think it is insulting to God when we believe He is angry and wrathful, just waiting to punish each of our misdeeds. If we spend our time believing that God is angry with us, we are focusing on what we have done wrong, instead of what God has done right in sending His Son to pay for our sins. For sure, we all sin, and God doesn't like it, but I believe that He is easier to get along with than we might think He is. He is good, kind, merciful and slow to anger, forgiving, faithful and just. He is to be loved, worshipped, praised, thanked, and adored. And yes, God is to be feared, but it is a reverential awe and respect that He wants us to have for Him, not a sick, debilitating, tormenting fear that destroys intimacy and relationship with Him. He wants us to fear Him, but not to be afraid of Him; there is a huge difference between the two.

Perhaps you need an entirely new view of God. A biblical view, not a worldview as many have today. I can assure you that no matter what you have done or what you may be doing right now that is wrong and sinful, God does love you, and although He may be angry at your ways, He has never stopped and never will stop loving you!

If you receive His love right in the midst of your imperfection, it will empower you to change your ways with His help. Fear does not help us truly change. It may provoke us to control our behav-

ior for a time, but unless we are changed inwardly, we will never change permanently. We will always revert to our sin in times of stress and weakness. But if we receive God's love even while we are still sinners, our gratitude for His great mercy will make us want to please Him rather than be afraid of Him.