

IS GOD A MORAL MONSTER?

Part 1: An Ancient World

Introduction:

Opening Conversation:

- What has been your experience with reading the Old Testament? Have you found certain passages challenging or difficult to understand?
- Have you ever encountered questions or objections from others regarding the morality of God in the Bible? How did you respond?
- What expectations do you have as we begin this discussion series on the character of God in the Bible?

Scripture Reading 1: Genesis 1-2

- *Read Genesis 1:31:* "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day."

Observation Questions:

- What does this passage tell us about God's original intention for creation?
- How does this idea of an "ideal state" help us understand the rest of the biblical narrative, especially in relation to human freedom and the entrance of sin into the world?

Scripture Reading 2: Acts 17:30

- *Read Acts 17:30:* "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent."

Interpretation Questions:

- Why do you think God chose to work within the cultural limitations of the Ancient Near East rather than imposing a new moral standard?
- How does the concept of "indentured servitude" differ from modern perceptions of slavery, and what does this tell us about God's character?
- How does God's patience and desire for repentance play into His engagement with humanity throughout history?

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Scripture Reading 3: Galatians 3:24-25

Read Galatians 3:24-25: "So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian."

Application Questions:

- How does this passage change your perspective on the purpose of the Old Testament law?
- In what ways can you apply this understanding to reconcile your view of God in both the Old and New Testaments?

Scripture Reading 4: Romans 3:25

Read Romans 3:25: "God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished."

Application Questions:

- How does this understanding of God's forbearance and the atonement through Christ affect your view of the Old Testament events and laws?
- What steps can you take this week to reconcile your understanding of God in the Old Testament with the loving nature of Jesus in the New Testament?
- As a group, how can we support each other in addressing the questions and challenges that arise from reading difficult passages in the Bible?

Notable Quote:

"In order to reconcile humanity, God had to engage with humanity where they were at, not where He wanted them to be."

Respond in Prayer:

- Pray for clarity and understanding as you continue to explore the tensions in Scripture.
- Ask God for wisdom to engage with difficult questions and the grace to hold on to faith even when answers are not immediately clear.