

# IS GOD BOTHERING YOU?

There is more than one way to read that question.

For example, you could hear it, “is God annoying you?” Or, “is the idea of God offensive to you?” How about, “is God too close – in your space, even?”

And then there’s, “Is God interrupting what you’re doing, to call you?”

I posed the initial question not too long ago on Facebook, and someone responded that for them, it was “all of the above.” I guess you could say they were truly bothered!

The question asserts that God is real, and God is personal...and this real, personal God is in some way infringing on what you thought was your day, your time, your space, your future, your mind...your life.

For some of us, that’s actually quite unwelcome.

We’re busy. We’ve done the hard work of making a life, and it’s all we can do to keep the spinning plates in the air, so to speak. And now we find ourselves thinking about God, and what God might want from us. Or, what God is doing in our life, and what that might mean for us. Who is God, to show up like that, unannounced, and meddle with things – and don’t we get a vote on that?

Or, perhaps we jettisoned God a long time ago. Convinced that the standard ways of thinking about Deity didn’t fit the world we found ourselves in, we gave up trying to make sense of all that, and we’ve been engaged in the world-that-is. But God keeps coming up, in the back of our mind, in the inner recesses of our heart. It seems unfair: we’ve done the work and put away childish things - why

should God show up in our consciousness again?

Or it could be, that once upon a time we were what you might call religious. But other religious people let us down. We found out that the clergy was petty, the upright good people at worship were capable of terrible things in other places and times, and that the people we counted on to love their neighbors – or at least us – turned out to be out for number one, just as much as any sinner.

In fact, we found out that our irreligious friends could be more faithful and better company than the folks who were supposed to be our “sisters and brothers.” The God stuff turned out not to be true, the way we’d been taught it. So we don’t want to think about God – but there he is anyway, dwelling at the periphery of our days, even waking us up at night.

For others of us, it’s not that God’s bothering us is unwelcome...it’s just unsettling.

Who are we that God, if there is a God, should be waking us up, causing us to wonder about Him in the shower, and coming up in every conversation?

We didn’t ask for this and are pretty sure we don’t deserve His attentions more than anyone else, but He keeps showing up.

What are we supposed to do about that? Who could we talk to about it, and not sound crazy? Who could we talk to about it, who ISN’T crazy?

After all, we don’t want to sound like the guy on the radio threatening the end of the world. We don’t want to wear animal skins and eat locusts. We don’t want to lose our friends

and the life we've made by becoming a religious nut.

And we're also afraid that God, once He finds out more about us, will say, "sorry, wrong number."

But...God keeps coming up.

*As one who has been bothered by God, let me reassure you that being bothered by God is not at all unusual.*

*In fact, the scriptures say that any relationship between humans and God begins at God's initiation. Even if we go looking for God, it's because God has given us a glimpse of God's own self, and made us hungry for him\*.*

*Instead, it's God who made us for companionship and partnership with him. And Jesus himself said that no one comes to him unless drawn to him first by God (see John 6:44).*

*So you aren't really very unusual if you've been finding yourself thinking about God and you don't know why.*

*But, can God really barge into your consciousness without being welcome? Don't you have any say in it? Well, yes, you do. God is extending to you an invitation, to respond to him, to come closer, to investigate. But God doesn't draw you nearer in order to overpower you once you get too close! The Bible is full of stories of people who found themselves bothered by God – but the choice to respond stayed in their hands.*

*The Bible teaches that God made humans with "free will" – in other words, with the capacity to make choices, even the choice not to be in relationship with God. We can*

*ignore God's invitation; he will indeed leave us alone. After awhile, you won't be bothered anymore.*

*But, is that what you really want? Shouldn't you know more about what God is saying to you first?*

*I'll agree that there are many ways in which God has been portrayed that would make a person decline his company, and even worse ways in which God's people have behaved that would cause a person to run.*

*But as pastor and author Rob Bell is quoted saying, "tell me about the God you don't believe in, and I probably don't believe in him, either." Is the God you are so turned off by, really who God is? And do those religious people whose hateful ways have so offended you really represent the real God?*

*As one who has been bothered by God, let me extend to you this thought: the God who truly IS, wants you to know the real him, before you live much more of your life apart from him.*

*He doesn't like the way he's been portrayed much more than you do, and he doesn't intend that the caricature of him that has been making the rounds should be his introduction.*

*He's bothering you, because he'd like to introduce himself.*

*And if, instead, you believe in God but don't think you are quite worthy of his active attention, may I suggest that he is far more likely to bother ordinary people than he is to bother those who think they are somebody big. Consider some of the now-famous bother-ees: Mary. Zechariah. Levi the Tax Collector. A nameless woman with a bad reputation. Peter, the impulsive fisherman. Martha the perfectionist housekeeper with a chip on her shoulder.*

*Nobodies, all. But Somebody to God, and all brought to fulfillment by an encounter with him.*

*God's bothering is always less about who we are, than about who he is. God made us for a reason. He meant for us to partner with him, to make a new world with him, to be his companions on a walk in the garden. And just because things got messed up, it doesn't mean that he has given up on all that. It turns out he has gone to great lengths so that we could get to know him.*

*So if God is bothering you, it's a good thing, and we would be honored if you would allow us to listen to your story, and perhaps walk with you a while in it.*

*Because we were bothered, too, and it meant real life to us.*

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly." --Jesus, John 10:10*

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*\*Male terminology (he, him) for God is used only because our language doesn't give us an easy non-gendered pronoun, other than "it," which clearly won't do. God is not male, nor is God female. But we will have to do the best we can with the language we've got, and in English it's been customary to use "he" and "him."*