

being.[5] Sometimes we may FEEL lonely, but forget we are not truly alone. Despite our FEELING of God's being far from us, God is faithful to His servants. Scripture evidences this (Genesis 28:15; Joshua 1:9; Jeremiah 1:6-7; John 8:29). God does not leave His faithful children during hardships, He carries them through it. "I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord. When the last scene of my life shot before me I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma. 'Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You, You would walk and talk with me all the way. But I'm aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don't understand why, when I need You most, You leave me.' He whispered, 'My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.'"[6] The Lord is truly our Shepherd (Psalm 23) and not far from us (Acts 17:27).

Life is hard and we need a little help. God is not the parent who withholds love, support, or comfort; He is the source of those things (2 Corinthians 1:3). God expects us to cry to Him (Psalm 50:15) and not hold in the thoughts, anxieties, and struggles. He knows that some things are too important to just dismiss. He knows we need a counsellor and consoler. He knows that if we do not lean upon His everlasting arms, we will sink in the everlasting harms. There are many weights that God does not expect us to carry alone.

- Temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- Trials (James 1:2-5).
- Transgressions (Matthew 11:28-30).

God wants His people to cast their cares upon Him.

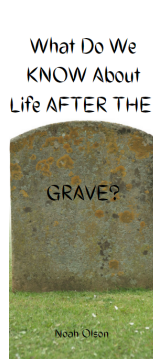
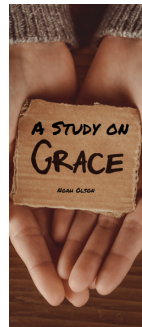
Parents know they cannot expect the unexpected from their children, bosses understand that perfection from employees is a hurtful task, and elders understand members are imperfect. When individuals expect the impossible of themselves they begin to hurt themselves

and over time, they will feel depressed, discouraged, and their faith may become damaged. Instead, expect the expected, give yourself some grace, and know that God loves you.

Endnotes

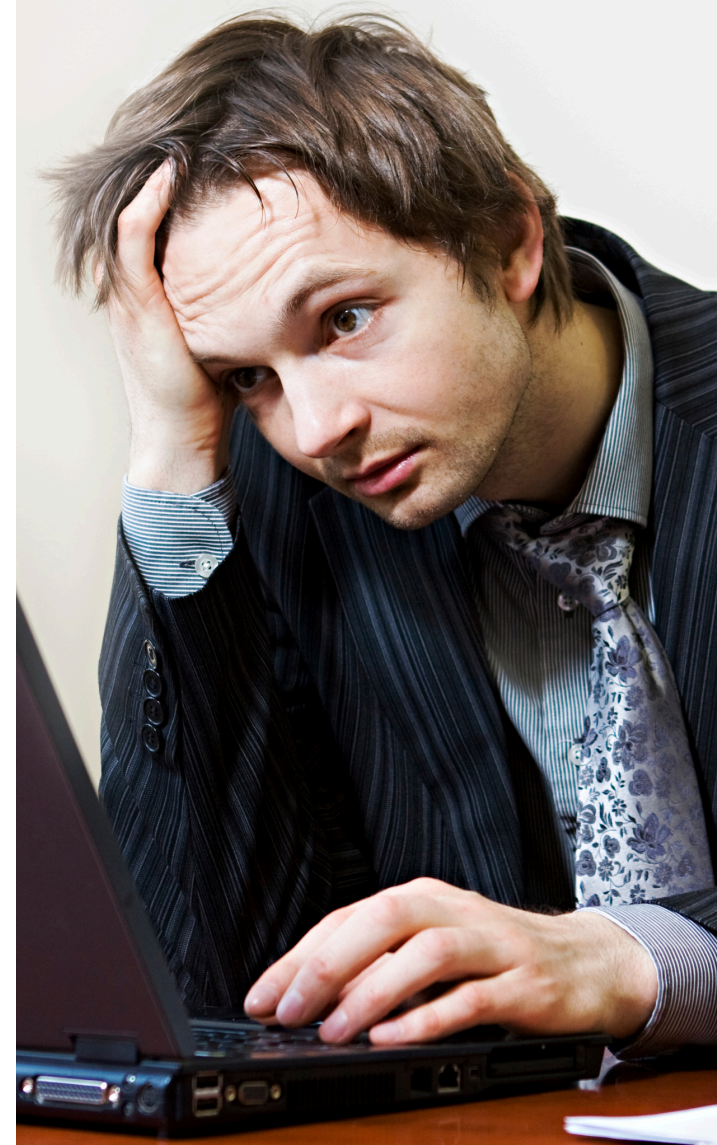
- [1]Allen Webster from a sermon given to Noah Olson
- [2]Preacher's Homiletical Commentary, eSWORD.
- [3]wwwpsychologytoday.com/us/basics/perfectionism
- [4]Ibid.
- [5]<https://writingsexplained.org/lonely-vs-alone-difference>
- [6]<https://www.ryanhart.org/footprints-in-the-sand/>

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Are You Expecting Too Much of Yourself?



Noah Olson

It matters how we view God. One preacher said, “if we see Him as harsh, we will fear Him. If we feel He is unfair, we will resent Him. if we think He is cruel, we will oppose Him. If we believe Him to be benevolent, we will trust Him. If we view Him as powerful, we will lean on Him. If we know He is concerned, we will communicate with Him.”[1] When our perception of God is skewed, our lives are overwhelmed in misery and frustration. God wants us to know Him as He is; however, sometimes we assume characteristics, thoughts, and actions on the part of God that Scripture nowhere affirms as true. While God expects the expected (Micah 6:8; John 14:15), expecting the unexpected on our part is a dangerous road to travel. God does not expect man to be perfect, just to be faithful, yet many are robbed from pure joy because of their attribution of false qualities upon God. Sometimes our hearts are wrong (Jeremiah 17:9; 1 John 3:20) and they need to be fixed (1 John 3:21). Sometimes there are “always sensitive souls, who are much to ready to think evil of themselves, and distress themselves with their evil-thinking.”[2] Dear reader, perhaps this describes you. Do you constantly fill your head with countless doubts and worries, wondering if you’re good enough? Do you endlessly wonder if God loves you, accepts you, or is there for you? Do you overwork yourself so much that you make Christianity an impossible road to trek? Knowing what God does not expect from us, will help us not expect so much of ourselves.

God Does NOT Expect us to Be Perfect.

Besides God (1 John 1:5), there is nothing today that we could deem as perfect. The perfect thing will get old, the perfect person will soon be flawed, and the perfect place will lead to moving again. Sinless perfection is never commanded in the Scriptures. Even when Jesus commands perfection (Matthew 5:48), the word (*teleios*) means complete and the context is about being complete in one’s love toward one’s enemies like God (Matthew 5:43-48). Destructively, we can ruin ourselves with perfectionism. Some “bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne” (Matthew 23:4) on themselves. Perfectionists raise the bar so high, that even minimal tasks cannot be accomplished. One said perfectionists,

“tend to procrastinate a project out of their fear of failure.”[3] There are many “negative outcomes, like procrastination, a tendency to avoid challenges, rigid all-or-nothing thinking, toxic comparisons, and a lack of creativity.”[4] Spiritual perfectionists may have similar qualities. Perhaps because of feeling, they pray five times for forgiveness for the same sin, withhold themselves from service to the Lord for fear of failure, or maybe they just do not think they are good enough for the Lord. Sometimes in attempting to do good in striving for perfection, they actually hurt themselves because of the standard they place upon themselves. Such can be detrimental to their faith, mental state, and lives.

Perfection is impossible. While many were “perfect,” this means they were mature, blameless, and complete (Genesis 6:9; Job 1:1). The truth of the matter is, people sin, have flaws, and times of weakness (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). He knows we will fail and has made provisions for when we do (1 John 2:1). Therefore, we must remind ourselves of His mercy, grace, and understanding (Psalm 103:6-13). We should remind ourselves that growth is an essential part of the Christian walk (2 Peter 3:18) and if perfection were attainable, then growth would not be needed. We can be faithful despite being imperfect, and the blood of Jesus helps us with that (1 John 1:7). Let us strive to give God our best knowing that God is working His hardest to get us into heaven, not keep us out of it. Edwin Bliss said, “The pursuit of excellence is gratifying and healthy. The pursuit of perfection is frustrating, neurotic, and a terrible waste of time.”

God Does NOT Expect us to Know Everything.

No one knows EVERYTHING, but God (Psalm 147:5). There are many intelligent people in the world, some of which reach into depths of knowledge far too incomprehensible for this author. Many throughout history have IQ’s over two hundred, obtained multiple PhD’s, and studied in fields only the brave have travelled. Despite the great understanding people have, they have just tipped the iceberg of knowledge. We can still go to heaven, not having done any of these things.

God doesn’t require scholars, but He does require students. God has revealed His will to man in written form and He expects them to know it (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 3:3; 2 Timothy 2:15; John 8:32). Although God expects us to know and defend His will, He does not expect us to be perfect students in everything we read. It is impossible to know everything. In fact, some things we were never meant to know (Deuteronomy 29:29).

- We will never know the depths of space, but God does.
- We will never know the exact fish that swallowed Jonah.
- We will never know WHY Nicodemus came at night.

God knows we will not be able to grasp everything. God knows our thoughts are not like His (Isaiah 55:8-9). He knows that we sometimes forget, oftentimes do not think logically, and many times are just plain ignorant. God’s grace gives us room to grow (1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 3:18). We may grow discouraged because we cannot recite every verse in the plan of salvation, grow disheartened because we cannot turn fast in our Bibles, or get angry when our Bible knowledge is not like the 60-year-old Christian. God understands that growth will take years, so He is patient with our unintelligence.

God Does NOT Expect us to Carry the Weight Alone.

A single mother may feel overwhelmed, tired, and discouraged trying to make ends meet for her and her children. A family is perplexed and troubled due to an act of adultery by the father. It may be a struggling teenager who faces issues with self-esteem and seclusion from friends. When life feels out of control, we become anxious, fearful, and unsettled. Loneliness creeps in, doubt fills our minds, and complacency begins to surround our lives. Often, we feel as though we must face these things alone, but some things are just too hard for us to bear. Thankfully, we can know the Lord does not expect us to stand alone (2 Timothy 4:17; Hebrews 13:5).

While we may feel lonely, we are never alone. Loneliness is a feeling, while aloneness is a state of