

HOW DEVOTION TO GOD CAN BE AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOUR

Avoidance behaviour happens when you sense something is not as it should be and you make it look like it is not a problem. It is unhealthy and stops growth.

Praying for a person is saying that it is ultimately up to God to help and not you. If you really can do nothing for a person but pray for them it follows that God is the only one who really helps. If people help it is not really them but God. This is the perfect rationale for avoidance behaviour. If God is meant to help a sick person and you don't then the responsibility is not yours.

Avoidance is based on the fear of failure, a refusal to admit that it is better to try than not to, a refusal to admit that not trying is in fact the worst failure of all. The person is trying to avoid the criticism and disapproval and hurt and rejection that she thinks will follow if she fails. But doing nothing will bring these things on her head far faster than trying and failing would.

Here is an example of God being used as an avoidance behaviour and giving rise to such behaviour.

#Here is another. "God should love and like me."

It denies that you must learn to feel good no matter what others say or think. It puts the responsibility on God to make you happy. Thus you will blame him if you are not.

Let us pretend it opens the way to you blaming him as opposed to it making you blame him. You are trying to hurt yourself emotionally by even taking such a degrading and needless risk. Belief in God always has an element of self-destructiveness.

Blaming God for your problems is worse than blaming people because you think that God being God creates and controls all things. It is better to be the stereotypical unhappy atheist than to believe in a God like that. He will always be perceived as a bigger threat than people are for he is always with you and is more powerful than they are.

If God is good, then by definition he should love and like you. The God concept then is inherently unhealthy. Those who promote it are trying to damage others the way they are damaged so that they feel better. Some say this is unintentional - but it is at least indirectly intentional. It is up to you to know your flaws and you can know them for you experience them. If you don't try or if you study theology and pray instead (they are not about self-knowledge! but are distractions) then you are saying that if you are damaged and your faith shows it you will still promote it.

#Here is another, "I depend on God for my life and for all things."

That is a form of the dangerous belief that your life is controlled by all that happens around you and by others but not you.

It is a form of the belief that you are not in this world for yourself but for God. The result is you feel your feelings and needs do not matter. If they fit into God's plan well and good, but they are not important because they are your feelings and your needs. It is the plan that counts. Such an outlook is riddled with self-hate.

It is a form of the belief that in reality no matter how good you are, you are really useless. To think that is to invite God to take responsibility for you. To declare your uselessness to others is to ask them to take responsibility for you. To feel powerless and a victim, is very destructive.

When a believer works for her inner happiness and peace, she thinks God is doing it not her. She is using God to make herself appreciate herself because she doesn't appreciate herself. She simulates and feels appreciation but this feeling is as unreal as the feeling of being in love with the world that may come from drink. She makes herself afraid of people who can challenge her belief. If she simply learned to appreciate herself directly and simply there would be no problem. Her lack of self-appreciation is still her underlying attitude. It is far more dangerous now that it is disguised. She has poured pink paint over the mess.

Believers in God give away the responsibility for their own lives to God. They may say they believe in personal responsibility but do they? If God gives you all your powers and your free will is even his responsibility then they are talking meaninglessly. They give it away to protect themselves from the risk of feeling bad about themselves.

Believers in free will need to see it as their creation not God's. That is the only way to avoid the thought, "Life is as it is and I cannot really change anything. Any changes only look like changes. They were going to happen anyway." Believers need to be atheists.

#Here is another, "I love God most."

If a person has experienced hurtful rejection in childhood, he or she may pervert the need for love and target it at somebody perceived as safe such as a child. Paedophiles do that.

If God is seen as safe, God may be the target of your love. God is made a non-threatening object of affection.

A child perceiving a rejection by God, can grow up to become a paedophile as a result.

God is useful to those who want to avoid deep relationships with others. Avoidance is about protecting yourself from the risk of the relationships failing. No real growth as a person takes place if one avoids dealing with the issues behind avoidance. Avoidance seeks to prevent a repeat of whatever it was that hurt you in childhood. Its about preventing the repeat of a rejection.

If a person has suffered grave loss in life, they may feel they need compensation from life and from God. An example would be the young mother who starts stealing after her baby dies. She feels she can enjoy the money and is entitled to. But feeling you need compensation from God or life is very unhealthy. It means you have not really moved on from the trauma. It means you are hiding the pain by putting on a brave smiling face. You are preventing recovery. Nobody else can learn from your example how to recover.

#Here is another. "I reject God and hate him."

If you have this feeling, then the reason is that you feel God will reject you anyway so you protect yourself by trying to prevent this in rejecting him. Deep down you feel you are not good enough. You feel that God could never love you. You will only believe that if you do not love yourself enough. If you are not good enough for a God of goodness then how can you be good enough for other people? He is supposed to be good while other people are good but flawed.

God is hated because you see the truth about the doctrine of sin. Sin is an immoral act forbidden by divine law. It implies you deserve punishment. This is not a helpful idea at all. Sin is a hindrance. So God is a hindrance. And the bigger the emphasis put on God the bigger the hindrance he is. His followers are hindrances. They hinder themselves and hinder others. What matters is not judging a person's actions as immoral or moral. What matters is not judging the person either.

Jane thumps her baby.

The job is to make Jane feel good about her baby so she will not do it again. The goal is to help Jane move on and not be feeling guilty. That does more than ignore the issues of sin and evil. It opposes them. They are an unnecessary malicious intrusion. It can look like they are being ignored but as we care only about Jane's emotional health they are actually being opposed.

The job is not to help Jane see that she did wrong. In fact we must understand why she did it and tell her that.

Her thumping the baby is about her wishing to be in control for she feels the baby threatens her freedom and happiness. The problem is not the baby. The problem is not Jane's thinking. We cannot lecture her saying, "You are wrong or stupid to think that the baby is a threat."

Instead we help her see that she perceived a threat and worked out a strategy to protect herself. She needs to go deep to see why she worked out that strategy. Is it because she feels she cannot stand up to a threat? That means her self-confidence needs work. Is it because she thinks she is a bad mother anyway and may as well hit the child? Again she feels bad about herself and isn't confident. Is it because she feels the baby will never love her? She doesn't love herself. Is it because she somehow feels people will feel sorry for her because of what she did to the child? Is it because she wants to lower other's opinion of her so that she will not have to suffer the pain of rejection and failure should she fail? Whatever it is, what she did was not about evil but about protecting herself and her emotions.

We cannot ask or expect Jane to change fast. It has to happen at her own pace. She will gradually feel that her sense of life being safe or safer is getting stronger. If we ask her to change her thinking we forget that positive thoughts cannot necessarily change her feelings. If her feelings improve they will attract other good feelings and good thoughts. Morality is about forcing change on a person if it does not happen. Threatening a person with punishment or bad consequences if they

do evil freely, is a subtle way of pressuring them. You pretend you want them to do good without pressure. But the pressure is there.

Morality has to be left out of the therapy. Feelings are not really good or bad. They are just feelings. There is to be no pressure on her to alter and change them. So she must work with them at her own pace. Do not compare her to a person who got through the issues fast. Encourage her to be herself.

Morality serves only to antagonise people with problems. It should be left out of life as well. Morality fulfils our need to judge - no wonder it collapses so easily. People feel judged by self-righteous people and it makes them angry and defiant. When the judge claims to be humble, people are sceptical about it.

Morality with its threats of punishment is useless. Being moral is sadly confused with being good. Yet we know that a child though incapable of being moral or believing in God can still be good and needs heartfelt praise. Our confusion is our own fault and down to the prejudice religion and society have bred in us.

Feeling she wants to do better, will do Jane more good in terms of inspiring her to do good than all the moral rules, social disdain, prayers, sacraments and religions in the world. Help her to feel good if you really want to help her. Help her to see that the threat is an illusion.

The only thing that matters at the end of the day is improving how you feel about yourself and feeling better about you if not good. God cannot matter as much as that so it is your god. Having a God defies that truth and takes it away from yourself and works to keep others in the dark. If you do not appreciate yourself you will be inclined to try and force others to appreciate you and damage them if they don't. You will be hostile. Belief in God is necessarily harmful for it wants the focus put on God and not on your inner wellbeing. It is no wonder that selfishness in the form of hostile and possessive and manipulative and violent behaviour is most common among religious people.

Hate is bad for you and poisons you emotionally and mentally. Hating God, the source and sustainers of all things, would be more destructive than hating any human being for God is seen as being the only thing that matters.

Do not hate God. Just don't care. God when understood as moral entity or enforcer is a crutch for those who want to feel superior to others by being their judge.

#Here is another. "God is speaking to me in my soul."

You don't want to believe that it is your subconscious mind that is doing this for you don't trust it. To trust it you tell yourself God is putting the message into your head. You are hiding from your lack of trust in yourself and your fear of error. By trying to run away from the risk you run into it.

It is arrogant to tell yourself that God has revealed something to you. Attributing your idea to God rather than yourself is an attempt to mask your arrogance. But arrogance whether indirect or direct is still arrogance all the way.

You would need to know as much as God to know that it is really God who is speaking to you.