

*MAYBE*  
GOD  
IS RIGHT  
AFTER ALL



CYNTHIA HEALD



TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS, INC.  
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

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*Maybe God Is Right After All*

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Designed by Beth Sparkman

Edited by Lynn Vanderzalm

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## Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Heald, Cynthia.

Maybe God is right after all / Cynthia Heald.

p. cm.

ISBN-13: 978-1-4143-0084-9 (sc)

ISBN-10: 1-4143-0084-0 (sc)

1. Christian women—Religious life. 2. Heald, Cynthia. I. Title.

BV4527.H398 2005

248.8'43—dc22

2005017289

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Printed in the United States of America

11 10 09 08 07 06 05

7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Maybe God Is Right After All

*Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and  
wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.<sup>1</sup>*

William Penn



This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: “I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow.”

*Isaiah 48:17*

As I entered the narrow gate and began my journey on the less-traveled road, I continued to learn about the radical ideas that stood as signposts on the path I had chosen. The more I studied, the more I realized how God’s teachings are often in direct opposition to our culture’s view of how life should be lived. God asks us to trust him; our culture says, “Believe in yourself.” God asks us to be holy; our culture says, “If it feels good, do it.” God asks us to deny ourselves; the culture says, “You are number one” and “You deserve to be happy.” God tells us that it is more blessed to give than to receive; the cultural voices say, “The one with the most toys wins.”

It’s not always easy to do what God says. In fact, it’s easier to “go with the flow” of our culture. But often we know in our heart

of hearts what is right. Sometimes we even sense the inner prompting of God's Spirit guiding us to the right path, but for any number of reasons, we think we know better and we ignore his leading.

Such was the case with Suzanne, a married Christian who had three children. She worked as a secretary for a man who attended their family's church. Things went well for a while; then one day Suzanne's employer took her to lunch. In subsequent months, Suzanne and her boss met more frequently, allowing themselves to be drawn into conversations that went beyond their professional association. Both people ignored the internal voices that warned them against their growing intimacy. Deceived by a culture that says, "Your happiness is worth everything," Suzanne and her boss followed their feelings instead of what they knew was God's will for them. Their relationship soon developed into a full-fledged affair.

After some time, Suzanne divorced her husband, hoping to start a new life with her employer. But her boss had second thoughts about the relationship and decided not to leave his family. In the end, Suzanne was left alone with shattered dreams and three children to raise.

When I met Suzanne, three years after her divorce, I could see that she still felt keenly the consequences of her infidelity. She was a working mom, trying her best to walk with God and care for her children. With tears in her eyes, she said that she still loved her husband, but the pain and betrayal were too much for him, and he was not willing to be reconciled. Suzanne lived in an "if only" world. If only she had not followed her feelings. If only she had stayed on the path God wanted her to follow. If only she had trusted that God knew what was right for her.

Suzanne is typical of so many people who begin to believe the

billboards posted on the world's broad road: "There are no absolutes. You are the one to decide what is right for you." Our culture mocks the narrow way, chiding that it is restrictive and joyless—a dead end. The billboards on the narrow road say, "Be holy," "Deny yourself," "Live your life according to the Bible's wisdom." The cultural voices ridicule, "How can denying yourself give you happiness? Didn't Jesus promise an abundant life? The narrow road is, well, narrow!"

Yes, I agree that the road is narrow, but the air on this path is fresher. God's way offers a sense of freedom and peace that our world cannot duplicate. In the past I had searched for wisdom and a radical lifestyle in a secular setting, believing that other people would provide the answers to living a fulfilling, satisfying life. But the wisdom of the world failed to address my need for eternal truth that gave hope, security, and purpose. Like Suzanne, I was deceived. I was left alone and unsatisfied. However, once I surrendered my life to Christ and devoted myself to studying his Word, God and his truth invaded my life and opened my eyes to the thought that maybe God is right—about a lot of things.

Early in my journey, I was captured by a verse in the Gospels: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing."<sup>2</sup> I had been searching for a belief system that would guide me in making a difference in my world and would give my life meaning. Here it was. If I continued to stay closely connected to Jesus, I would be fruitful. I would grow, becoming someone who could make an impact on those around me.

The Lord's words were clear: "Apart from me you can do nothing." I thought, *Maybe God is right. Maybe he knows what he is talking about when he says that any life lived apart from him will*

*not have any eternal significance.* It was this truth that helped me to live the radical idea that God is the One who has the authentic road map to life. Maybe the world, even with all its bravado, is wrong. The great statesman William Penn was right: “Right is right, even if everyone is against it; and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it.”

I was beginning to wholeheartedly agree with Penn, especially that right is right even if everyone is against it. I was encouraged when I read what the Old Testament prophet Hosea says about God’s being right: “Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those who are discerning listen carefully. The paths of the Lord are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them. But sinners stumble and fall along the way.”<sup>3</sup> Because I was listening carefully to the Word of God, I could trust that the Lord’s paths are true and right—because *God* is right.

As I searched deeper into the Bible’s wisdom, I was encouraged when I read Jeremiah’s words: “This is what the Lord says: ‘Don’t let the wise boast in their wisdom, or the powerful boast in their power, or the rich boast in their riches. But those who wish to boast should boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord who demonstrates unfailing love and who brings justice and righteousness to the earth, and that I delight in these things.’ I, the Lord, have spoken!”<sup>4</sup>

I have learned over the years that true wisdom comes not from our culture and its many voices but from knowing who God is. God, above all, is righteous—good, unerring, trustworthy, irreprouchable. If I can ever boast about anything, it is that I believe God is who he says he is. He is right. He is absolute. He is fair and just, and his love never fails. For me, discovering that God is righteous—right—in all his ways was at once humbling and reassuring. I prayed, “Oh, Lord, thank you for enabling me to find you and

to know the truth that you, and you alone, are right. I can trust you in the midst of a frantic, mixed-up world.”

When Suzanne first felt attracted to her boss, when she initially became involved in the affair, God’s ways seemed restrictive and narrow to her. The command to be holy, to be faithful, to run from sexual immorality, seemed to run counter to what she wanted, to what she thought would make her feel good. She didn’t want to deny herself the pleasures that went with this man’s attention. However, any pleasure she experienced was short-lived. And as is often the case, she continues to live with the consequences of leaving the true and right path. When Suzanne finally realized that her wrong choices had caused such devastating pain, she must have prayed, “Oh, God, you were right after all.”

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One of the reasons we can trust that God is right is because he made us. We belong to him. The psalmist tells us, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.”<sup>5</sup> It is logical to believe that since everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God, then he knows what is right and true for us. He has every right to tell us how to live. Who better to know the paths we should take than the One who created us?

The Bible is filled with people who learn, often too late, that God’s paths are true and right. Take Adam and Eve. God provided abundantly for them in the lush Garden. He gave them everything—with one restriction: He told them not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God’s instruction was for their good. He wanted to protect them and keep them on the right path.

But in one fatal moment, Adam and Eve chose to believe voices other than God's. First, they succumbed to Satan's deception, to his play on their self-centeredness: "Don't take God's instructions too seriously," he enticed. "Take what you want. Live life on your own terms." Adam and Eve believed him. What a mistake. Second, they listened to their own rationalizations: "God can't be trusted. He really doesn't know what's best for us. We can make our own choices. We know better than God what is right for us."

We are still living with the consequences of Adam and Eve's refusal to follow God's instructions. After they ate the forbidden fruit, they realized they had sinned.<sup>6</sup> As they hid from God, I can imagine that they said to one another, "Maybe God was right after all."

Adam and Eve weren't the only people who suffered the consequences of thinking God can't possibly know what's best. When God directed Moses to take the Israelites into Canaan, a land the Lord had prepared for his children, they rebelled and did not enter the land. They relied on their own insight and refused the path God had for them. I cannot help but think that as the Israelites trudged through the wilderness for forty years, many of them whispered to one another, "Maybe God was right after all."

Jesus reiterated this truth in a story he told about a young Jewish man who demanded his inheritance from his father and left to live life on his own terms.<sup>7</sup> Again in this story, the father provided everything the son needed, but the son thought he knew better. He took his inheritance money and spent it on wild living. We can only imagine the parties, the women, the food the young man indulged in, hoping to find satisfaction. However, he was in for a rude awakening. At the same time that his money gave out,

a famine swept through the countryside. The young man was reduced to a pitiful life of feeding pigs. And because he was so hungry himself, he ended up eating the pigs' food—unthinkable for a Jewish man. It was then that he concluded, "Maybe my father was right after all." He turned from his sinful ways, returned home, and asked for his father's forgiveness. He pleaded to be allowed to serve as a mere servant in his father's home. For with his father, no matter what the son's position would be, his path would be true and right.

Jesus used the story to teach his listeners that God, our Father, knows what is best for his children. When we trust that he is right and follow his ways, we find joy; when we don't, we end up eating cornhusks in the pigpen.

When I consider the radical life Jesus led, I realize that even though he was God in the flesh, he modeled for us the truth that his Father is right. Jesus shared this thought with his disciples: "I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want."<sup>8</sup> That truth was as radical in Jesus' day as it is today.

Jesus perfectly exemplifies for us the truth that loving what is right and wanting to live God's way brings joy. God said to his beloved Son, "You love what is right and hate what is wrong. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you, pouring out the oil of joy on you more than on anyone else."<sup>9</sup>

Over the years, I have encountered many women who have learned that the teaching of the Lord is good and right. While driving me to the airport after I had spoken at a conference, Lillian began to share about her concern over a broken relationship. A woman at her church had hurt her with an unkind, off-hand remark at a group meeting. Lillian struggled with what to do. She wanted to run away whenever she saw this woman, and

she knew that wasn't right. As I listened, I asked Lillian if she had gone to the person in order to seek reconciliation.

Lillian answered, "No. I sought counsel from our group leader, and she offered to handle it for me. So far nothing has been resolved."

I then said, "You know, maybe God is right when he taught that if someone sins against you, then you are the one to go to that person." I read her the passage in Matthew: "If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back."<sup>10</sup> We discussed how she might pray and ask God to show her the path to reconciliation.

A week later I received a letter from Lillian. "You told me that when I have a grievance with someone, I need to go to the person directly. Well, I did! It was very hard to do, but I am so thankful and so freed in my thoughts now. I am praying that God will use it for good. It was very difficult, but the person was humbled and receptive. I am praising God."

As I read her letter, I thought once more, *Maybe God is right after all.*

Carolyn lived next door to a cantankerous neighbor who had a pit bull. If the dog had been fenced in, it would not have been such a problem. But no fence separated Carolyn's yard from her neighbor's. The pit bull was a continual annoyance to both Carolyn and her dog.

One day when she was discussing the problem with her neighbor, the man, who had a personality similar to his dog's, became belligerent and said some harsh things. Feeling hurt and angry, Carolyn went back into her house. As she stewed, a verse from Scripture came to her mind: "Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you."<sup>11</sup> Praying for that man

was the last thing Carolyn wanted to do, but she was receptive to God's instructions. Pray she did, and her anger subsided.

A few days later when she was out walking her dog, the neighbor came out and apologized: "You know, I shouldn't have spoken to you the way I did. I was wrong."

As Carolyn told me this story, I found myself remarking, "Isn't it great to know that maybe God is right after all?"

In my own life, I continually have to acknowledge that God's truths are right. I once visited a good friend who had just remodeled her home. It was beautiful and had everything I think a home should have, including a paneled library and a huge walk-in closet with built-in shelves and drawers. When I left her home, I was somewhat depressed. Actually I was envious. I thought, *Lord, I could really enjoy living in a home like that. I wish I had one that nice.* Then some verses I had memorized marched to the forefront of my mind and demanded my attention: Love "does not envy."<sup>12</sup> I was lovingly and justly rebuked. God was teaching me that if I truly love, I will not envy. I also remembered another verse: "Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind."<sup>13</sup> He also made it clear that my current "disorder" originated from jealousy. God was leading me along the path that was true and right. Again, God is right after all.

God is God, and he is right in all he does. He is also a God who restores and redeems. I am astounded by God's grace to his children even when we do not live his way. He takes our sinful self-absorption and patiently waits to redirect our lives. Adam and Eve had to leave the Garden, but God continued to lead them and bless them. The Isra-

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and he is right  
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elites had to wander in the wilderness, but God continued to guide them and provide for their needs. The young Jewish man returned home and continued to live as his father's beloved son. God's grace restored Suzanne to the true and right path, and his care for me tenderly teaches me not to envy. Because God created us and redeemed us by Christ's death on the cross, he wants us to understand that he is committed to leading us to paths that are good and right. It pleases him to see us living radically in his Kingdom, for when we do, we are saying to the rest of the world, "Maybe God is right after all."



Look, God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him? No one can tell him what to do. No one can say to him, "You have done wrong."  
*Job 36:22-23, NLT-1*

## PRAYER

### **A Prayer for Recognizing That God Is Right**

Heavenly Father, while I am here on this earth, I want to stay on the paths you have marked out for me because I know that I would not be content anywhere else. I want to boast that I know and understand that you alone are just and righteous. Keep me from presuming that I know the best way. Please show me your ways, and prompt me to choose your true and right paths. I don't want to go through life tripping and stumbling.

Thank you for your unfailing love and grace when I question the path I'm on. Keep me on this less-traveled road—for my life is yours, and I want what is right in your Kingdom even if everyone else is against it. In Jesus' name, amen.



4. God wants to be intimately involved in your life. What do these verses say to encourage you to walk the Lord's paths?
  - a. Psalm 25:8-10
  
  - b. Psalm 37:23-24
  
  - c. Jeremiah 10:23
  
5. "God's paths get you where you want to go" is an insightful translation of Hosea 14:9. What situation in your life needs direction at the moment? Write out a prayer asking God to lead you on the right path.

## SCRIPTURE

### **Scripture for Remembering That Maybe God Is Right After All**

This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: "I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is good for you and leads you along the paths you should follow." *Isaiah 48:17*