

How **BIG** Is Your God?

"There Jesus was transfigured before them." Mark 9:2

Lord, help me to do great things as though they were little, since I do them with Your power; and little things as though they were great, since I do them in Your name.
- Blaise Pascal

As soon as children are old enough to speak, one of 1st questions parents ask them : "How big are you?" Children always give the same answer ... "I'm sooooo big!" They raise hands above head – as if to say "I'm huge. I'm enormous. There's no telling how big I may be."

It's not scientific answer. It's an answer you can't use every day. For example, if your spouse asks you "How big do my hips look to you?" ... It's not wise to say ... they're sooooo big! ... if you want to stay married, or stay living.

We teach our children to say this because we want them to realize they are growing. We know that how they think of themselves matters. We DON'T want them to think of themselves as small, weak, and lacking enough strength to handle the challenges of life.

Here's a more important question: ... HOW BIG IS YOUR GOD? How big is Christ in your life?

I strongly believe that the way we live is a consequence of the size of our God. **The Problem We Face:** is that we make **Our God Is TOO SMALL!** It's as if we look at God the wrong way through a telescope. We aren't absolutely convinced that we are safe in the hands of a fully competent, all-knowing, always present, deeply loving BIG GOD – who has come near to you.

Do you live with anxiety, fear, self-focus, insecurity, fatigue? Anyone here? All these negative emotions come from having a small God.

We need confidence to live. We need peace in our lives. Everyone needs a sense of security. Confidence, peace, and security come from only one place. They don't come from money. They don't come from a job. Confidence, peace, and security don't come from a home, or looks, and not even from family. These essential qualities for living come only from God. And not from a little god. Confidence for your life, inner peace, security come from trusting in Jesus, who is GOD, A BIG GOD.

What Happens if we live with a Small God?

- We live in a constant state of fear and anxiety because everything depends on us.
- When we have a chance to share our faith we shrink back because whether or not the person believes all depends on us.
- We cannot be generous because our financial security depends on us.
- We don't live in the security of God's acceptance and become slaves to what others think of us. We become afraid of someone getting mad at us, or disapproving of us. We often won't speak all of truth because we want others to like us.
- When we are wronged, we don't trust in a God who sees in secret and will one day give justice on all wrongs.
- We do not have the security of knowing a God who is watching out for us.
- When we see God as little, we offer prayer without faith, work without passion, service without joy. It results in fear, retreat, loss of vision, and failure to persevere.

When we don't see Jesus as God -- When we aren't absolutely convinced that we are safe in the hands of a fully competent, all-knowing, always present, deeply loving GOD, we are actually doubting Him. It's a sinful lack of faith. It not only hurts us by leaving us in fear and anxiety and worry. That doubt is also wrong, putting us under the judgement of Almighty God.

Jesus often rebuked and corrected His 12 disciples. He said, ***"O you of little faith! Why did you doubt?!"***

When our idea of Jesus is small and not strong, not caring, -- that's not just an innocent mistake. It's because of disconnectedness from God that we do this. It is sin. You *NEED* a big God -- a big Jesus -- who is capable of forgiving you and giving you a new start, and caring enough to give Himself for you.

HOW BIG IS JESUS?

Pastor John Ortberg tells wonderful story of walking down street one night. As he walked past a bar, there was a fight going on. Three guys were badly beating up one man. These guys came crashing through the door of the bar, out onto the sidewalk, like a scene straight out of an old Western movie. The one man was being beaten up badly, and something had to be done to stop this fight. But stopping barroom fights was not his gift. Nevertheless, in he meanest, toughest sounding voice, while trembling in fear, he managed to squeak out: *"All right you guys, cut it out right now! I'm serious!"*

The three men looked at Pastor Ortberg, and immediately turned and ran away. He was surprised to say the least. "Then," Pastor Ortberg writes, "I looked behind me. There I saw one of the biggest guys I had ever seen. He was apparently employed as a bouncer at the bar. I would guess that the man stood about 6-foot-7 and weighed 350 pounds or so, with perhaps 2 % body fat. If Hercules had married Wonder Woman, this could have been their child. We called him Mongo. Not to his face, though.

"Mongo" did not say a word. He just stood there with muscles bulging. He looked as if he hoped they would try to take him on.

"In that moment, my attitude was transformed. I called after the 3 fighters "You'd better not let us catch you hanging around here again!" We were different people – because we had a great big Mongo."

Later, reflecting on that scene, Pastor Ortberg wrote: "I was ready to confront with firmness. I was filled with boldness. I became courageous. I was released from all fear and anxiety, and ready to serve someone who needed help. WHY? Because

Mongo drew near. Mongo came along side. With a big Mongo present, even a barroom fight was a perfectly safe place to be.

If you and I had a big Mongo with us 24 hrs/day, 7 days /week, we'd be different people. We'd have a different approach to life!

Well he's not. You can't have a Mongo 24/7. And that's a good thing, because YOU DON'T NEED HIM! You have ONE greater than a Mongo with you ALL THE TIME! That's your BIG God – Jesus!

Today is a Sunday called "Transfiguration Sunday." It comes right before the 6 weeks of the season of Lent, when we focus on Jesus going to the cross and giving His life for us. But before we make that trip of focusing on Jesus' journey towards the cross, we stop to remember who Jesus is. Who IS this man who is going to give His life for you on the cross?

One day, Jesus led His 3 closest disciples up on a high mountain. They were totally surprised when He was transfigured. His appearance changed. They saw Jesus in all His glory as true God.

Moses and Elijah appeared and talked with Jesus. Moses was the main guy to write the Law part of the Bible, and Elijah was the greatest prophet. These two appearing tell us that the Law and the prophets – that is, all the Old Testament – the thousands of years of history of God working and promising, and people waiting and hoping and trusting – all that was building up to what was unfolding before the disciples' own eyes that day. Here was God about to go to the cross for all people.

Jesus clothes became dazzling white, bright as the sun. His face shone. He appeared in all His heavenly glory.

Peter wanted to build 3 tents and stay there. He started babbling – he was so taken back that he didn't know what to say.

In a loud voice, God the Father spoke. The Bible tells us: ***"Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud: 'This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!'"*** This Jesus is God's Son. He is true God come down to us!

Matthew tells us that Moses and Elijah were talking to Jesus about His “departure from Jerusalem.” This means these two great men of faith were talking with Jesus about how He would very soon die, and rise again, and leave this earth by ascending up into heaven. They were talking with Jesus about His going to the cross. About fulfilling God’s eternal plan to save all people!

Jesus then told His disciples He would rise from the dead. He was determined to go and give Himself to die on the cross and rise from the dead.

Jesus clearly showed the disciples who He is – true God. And He clearly told the disciples what He was going to do. The two go together. This is God Himself going to the cross. God Himself is giving His life for us. This is your Greater than Mongo taking on sin and our guilt and the powers of the Evil One – and He is strong enough, capable enough to win – and loving enough to do it for you!

And Jesus was trying to get His disciples to open their eyes. Trying to get them to see who He is and what He was doing for them.

Mark records this all in the Bible also. The progression is amazing! – Jesus heals a blind man so he can see. Then Jesus asks His disciples who the people see Him as – who do they think He is? Then Peter proclaims Jesus is the Christ, as the Son of God, the promised Savior.

So Jesus explains what that means. That He must suffer and die. The disciples expected God to send a Messiah to who would demolish suffering – not one who would suffer and die. So Jesus tries to get them to open their eyes – to see that He is going to the cross.

And then comes the Transfiguration. This amazing event showed them who He is. This event was to get His disciples then – and get you today – to see. To see Jesus IS God, and GOD went to the cross and give His life for you!

You have One greater than Mongo on your side 24/7! Do you see Him that way? How you see Him makes all the difference in how you live!

Do you see that Jesus is **Big Enough to TRUST, (not WORK).**

Peter was on the mountain, and he wanted to work – he thought somehow he needed to add to the scene. He wanted to pound some tent pegs.

SO MANY PEOPLE don't see Jesus as big enough and capable enough to handle their wrongs, to win their forgiveness, and give them heaven free and clear. SO MANY PEOPLE figure there *MUST* be something they've got to do. They know they aren't perfect, but they figure they've got to live good clean lives -- love their family, keep their lawn mowed, and not cheat on their taxes. If they do that, they figure, then maybe, hopefully, God possibly, just might let them into heaven one day. That's as silly as Peter standing in the presence of Almighty God, blown away by the scene, but he wants to pound tent pegs.

See folks,-- if that's your plan, how can you EVER know you've done enough? Or done the right things? You'll live your whole life never knowing whether or not you will spend forever in heaven. You'll live your whole life filled with anxiety, and fear, and worry.

Jesus is true God. He is sinless, perfectly holy and pure. And THAT GOD is the One who went to the cross and gave His life to pay for your wrongs and win for you heaven, and forgiveness and hope as His gifts to you. This is not because of what you've done but because of what He's done for you.

So now you do good things in your life

- not to GET accepted by God, but because you ARE already accepted by Him.
- You do good things, not to GET forgiven, but because you already ARE forgiven.
- Not to GET TO heaven, but because you are ALREADY heaven bound.

- Not to live a RELIGION, but because you are in a RELATIONSHIP with a BIG God who gave His life for you and loves you like none other!

He's BIG enough to trust. Big enough to handle all your fear and uncertainty. Do you see Jesus as BIG enough to trust?

Do you see Jesus as **Big enough to worship? (Not to speak).**

"He did not know what to say, they were so frightened."

"Jesus was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them."

Jesus on the mountaintop shows He is true God. When we come to perceive the vastness, and worthiness, and strength of God, then we should stand before Him in speechless silence. And that's worship.

Peter was on the mountaintop, and he starts babbling. He didn't know what to say.

When you come into the presence of the Almighty, eternal. All-loving God, stand in awe and PRAISE the greatness of His power and love.

Worship changes your perspective. So often we go through life focusing on our problems. But when you encounter our BIG God, your perspective changes. You lose your preoccupation with yourself, and you see God. A sense of wonder, and amazement, and gratitude returns to you.

God has made us so that when we experience something transcendently great, we have a need to express praise. Our experience is not complete until we can put words to it. When you see Grand Tetons for first time, or a double rainbow, or an eagle in flight, something in our spirits moves us to express the joy we feel.

It's the same way in worship. When you see your BIG God, your spirit soars, lose your worry, you fall in silence, and you just praise Him.

He's Big enough to trust; big enough to worship. And do you see Jesus as **Big Enough to CARE, (not WORRY).** Because

Jesus shows us He IS God, and because He went to the cross and proved His love for you, You know He will care for you. Your worries about the economy, or sickness, or your relationships, you can put those in the hands of your BIG God. He is able to care for them. He is able to care for you. He can handle it. He loves you and WANTS to handle it. You don't have to worry!

And Jesus is **Big Enough to EMPOWER, not Do It Myself.**

So many people need your help. So many people need your care. So many people need your love. But do you ever feel like "I just don't have it in me to love, and care, and be generous as I'd like. I just don't have the energy, the strength, the wisdom or the right words to say." Ever feel that way? Your BIG God, Jesus, has promised to empower and energize and deepen your love for others and keep you going. Don't worry, it doesn't all depend on you. He's God – big enough to empower you.

In C.S. Lewis' book *Prince Caspian*, one of the children comes upon Aslan, the lion, who is the figure of Christ in the chronicles of Narnia. The child says to Aslan (Christ), "Aslan, you're bigger."

That is because you're older, little one," answered he.

"Not because you are?"

"I am not. But every year you grow, you will find me bigger."

So it is with us and God. You receive an inner peace that comes from knowing that you have a BIG God whom you can trust. [the more troubles you go through in your life, the bigger your God will become for you – and you will experience His peace]

If you are living in fear, remember that you have a BIG God beside you. If you are upset about a problem or an offense, put the issue into the proper perspective of having a BIG God, and *then* seek to resolve your problem in its new perspective. If you are living a routine existence, allow yourself to be lost in wonder and gratitude as you daily notice the blessings your BIG God showers upon you.

He's Big enough to trust. Big enough to worship. Big enough to care. Big enough to Empower. He's Jesus. True God, who died and lives for you.