

Am I in the Place of God?

Joseph's brothers had sold him as a slave into Egypt and allowed their father to believe he had been killed by a wild animal. God blessed Joseph and within a dozen years he was a prince in Egypt. Because of a famine Joseph's brothers eventually were forced to Egypt to buy grain... from Joseph. Finally, Joseph and his brothers were reconciled and the whole family moved to Egypt. When their father Jacob died the brothers were fearful that Joseph would extract revenge on them, but he refused, saying, "Am I in the place of God?" (Genesis 50:19). Joseph forgave his brothers because vengeance belongs to God. Joseph was not God.

That's a good question: "Am I in the place of God?" It is a short step in religion, which is influenced heavily today by postmodern thinking, to assume that we know how God thinks, how God feels, and what God wants—the assumption is that divine thoughts, feelings and desire are the same as ours.

In a postmodern world where what is right is often determined by what flawed humans think is right, it is easy to put ourselves in the place of God and to make decisions based upon human thinking rather than upon divine revelation. People approach the Bible as though it is a smorgasbord where we can choose what we like and reject what doesn't appeal to us. We decide some things are important and some things are not, depending upon our likes and dislikes.

What is big and what is little must be decided by God and not by human reason. Ask Nadab and Abihu, Uzzah, or Ananias and Sapphira. If God's word is not the ultimate standard of right and wrong, then the church is on a sea of speculation without clear chart or compass. The real question is whether God will be God or we will presume to be "in the place of God." What does the Bible say? That's the question. Granted, there are some things more important than others but to acknowledge this fact is a far cry from concluding that anything God says is unimportant and that such things are to be decided by faulty human reason. —**Jay Lockhart**