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# THE GODSHAPED BRAIN

How Changing Your View of God Transforms Your Life

Timothy R. Jennings, M.D.

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What you believe about God actually changes your brain. Brain research in neuroscience has found that our thoughts and beliefs affect our physical, mental and spiritual health. Mind and body are interrelated, and we are designed for healthy relationships of love and trust. When we understand God as good and loving, we flourish. Unfortunately, many of us have distorted images of God and mostly think of him in fearful, punitive ways. This leads us into unhealthy patterns of self-defeating behaviors and toxic relationships. But our lives can change when God renews our minds with a truer picture of him. Psychiatrist Tim Jennings unveils how our brains and bodies thrive when we have a healthy understanding of who God is. He dispels common misconceptions about God and shows how different God concepts affect the brain differently. Our brains can adapt, change and rewire with redeemed thinking that frees us from unnecessary pain and suffering. Discover how neuroscience and Scripture come together to bring healing and transformation to our lives.

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25 of 28 people found the following review helpful.

What an awesome perspective!!

By Stephanie

The concepts and metaphors in this book are so refreshing to read! I can't get over how insightful and encouraging this book is! I bought several to share with family and friends!! How wonderful to finally make sense of some of those "harsh" bible texts that make God out to be someone to be scared of! He isn't!! God IS love! He can be nothing else. And he longs for us to live in harmony with his law of LOVE... not some arbitrary imposed law!! If you've ever been confused about God's love versus his "wrath" or have felt like some things just don't make sense... PLEASE read this book!! Timothy Jennings does a fantastic job of helping things to make sense!! Some of it might shake and rattle what you've always believed about God, but I promise... it is nothing but light shown on God's true character!! It just makes so much more sense! And how awesome to know that not only is God love... but that even just believing this about God, not fearing Him... is so beneficial for your brain and well-being! Wow, wow, wow!!! Seriously, buy this book!!

27 of 32 people found the following review helpful. Practical and Impactful with New Insights By CAL

This book really shows how your beliefs can change you; not only mentally, but also physically. Although there is a lot of neuroscience, it is easy for a non-clinician to understand. The author demonstrates beautifully how God and science go hand in hand, and reveals that not all God concepts are equally healthy. Even if you currently have a relationship with God, the concepts in this book will help you love Him more. But if you've ever had ideas about God that were unsettling to you; that you couldn't wrap your brain around, then you definitely need to read this book. I promise you will see God in incredible new light.

34 of 43 people found the following review helpful.

heartbreaker

By Bruce Hollenbach

There is a lot of good in this book, and for that I feel that I am in Dr. Timothy Jennings's debt. However, I would have liked to find the good parts in a form that I could recommend even to the undiscerning reader. I think we really need more understanding of God as the one who goes out of his way to seek us and entice us (if you will) into re-establishing a relationship with him, a God who is essentially and passionately on our side, definitely not wanting to punish anyone or to see them perish ultimately. You will find this God in this book, but the book could have been so much better!

The style of the book is not what I could call dispassionate exposition. And so one wonders about its objectivity. It is highly rhetorical, even loaded with rhetorical questions which the Dr. Jennings obviously assumes that we will eagerly answer his way. Some of these I had to study for a while before I was sure which way he DID want me to answer them. I can understand why he would be enthusiastic over his topic, but he could have lowered the heat and been more effective.

Odd, isn't it, that a book so heavy in theological themes should be "praised" exclusively by people in psychiatry and related professions? Couldn't even one Bible scholar or recognized theologian be found who might have recommended this book to us? One problem this could have caused Dr. Jennings is that the discussion of how God didn't kill anyone in the OT but simply laid them down to sleep in their graves and only does otherwise (?) since the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not only innovative but very unlikely to stand up under examination.

If the page or so of material on "Political Orientation and the Brain" (pp. 68-69) had been eliminated entirely, it would have improved the book significantly. Dr. Jennings makes no distinction between political and religious conservatism, and so he creates a lot of confusion in these few paragraphs. Does he mean to tell us that it would be better for us registered Republicans to convert to the Democratic party, that that would give us healthier brains and make us nicer, more generous people? If so, he should write another book on that subject alone, and in that book he should explain why study after study shows that political conservatives are consistently and significantly more generous when it comes to charitable giving than their "liberal" counterparts. As for Saul/Paul, if we know anything about this man's political orientation, it would be that he was a life-long conservative, never wavering from his commitment to the most conservative political model possible, which is theocracy as manifested in the political system under which the children of Israel operated in the OT (in their better days) and then again in the kingdom of God as Jesus initiated it and preached it throughout his ministry. As for Paul's religious orientation, we have no doubt as to what it came to be, but Dr. Jennings should know that people cannot be described as flatly and simply as he purports to describe Saul before his conversion and Paul after. I suspect that he was pretty much the same guy still but now with a total switch in his understanding of reality. This would naturally alter Paul's way of reacting emotionally and mentally to the world around him, but maybe not quite as suddenly and totally as Dr. Jennings suggests. I'll wait for another book by Dr. Jennings to set me straight on this. Also, in the second paragraph of this section there is a statement more or less of the type "I'm not sure if it's heads I win or tails you lose, but I tend to lean toward the former." This and other minor errors show that another pass by a copy-reader would have benefited the final presentation of the book.

BTW, it is helpful for Dr. Jennings to present his understanding of how the brain changes under various emotional and mental influences, but constant reference back to these changes as he discusses people in different emotional and mental states does not really add to the discussion. After all, no one of Dr. Jennings's profession ever had a look at Paul's brain before and after Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. For that matter, I doubt that anyone actually investigated any of Dr. Jennings's patients to actually observe the changes that Dr. Jennings assumes (and maybe correctly) to have occurred there. Some ink and paper could have been saved here.

And yet I'm glad I read the book. I've been moving much of my life from the "punitive God" model to the "loving God" model, and this book offers support to people with me on the road.

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