



Discovering Your Views of God

Introduction

Our view of God or God-image is shaped by the actual nature of our experience in the family, with our mom and our dad. Psychiatrist M. Scott Peck explains that it is not so much what they say, but rather what they do. "It is not what they tell us about God, but rather how they behave toward each other, toward our siblings and, above all, toward us – that provides us an understanding of God.... It is the unique world they create for us by their behavior."

The way we see God will determine what we can receive from Him. Our understanding of God will influence our ability to draw near to Him, to tell him the desires of our heart, to make our needs known to Him, to believe that He hears us and cares, to show him our pain, our grief, our anger, to receive His grace and peace.

How can we draw near to God and go to his throne of grace, if we do not know whether He loves us like a good father would.

- My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:17).
- Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy in the time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Views of God molded by experience in family

How we view God is molded by the way our parents treated us, and our image of God determines how we respond to God and how much we let God give us. Harsh, punitive parents give us a legacy of a harsh, punitive deity. Physical, sexual, emotional, or mental abuse by a parent sends a message to the child saying, "I can treat you however I want." Our God image can be twisted by the unloving ways we were treated, making us open to sin patterns based on those distortions.

So for many people their views of God are filled with a lot of lies, half-truths, distortions, deceptions, false expectations, and presumptions. And this understanding of God resides very deep in our heart, our memories--below the surface of consciousness. We can sometimes discover what we really believe about God by exploring our inner pictures and images carried in our heart.



Drawing pictures of our inner views of God

The process of drawing helps us to get in touch with what we inwardly feel or know deep in our heart, like attitudes, conflicts, hopes, and search for meaning, but find it difficult to express verbally with words.

Some people have drawn God as ...

- An eye looking down at them
- A stone tablet
- A strong arm
- An ear
- A big heart
- A finger pointing down at them
- A judge with a measuring stick.

My husband's drawing of God

My husband Jerry grew up in a Christian family. His parents read the Bible after the meals; they prayed before and often after they ate. They never missed church and church meetings. Yet, he grew up, not really wanting to get too close to God or to serve Him. He didn't think God liked him very much, and he really didn't like God that well either.

All through his growing up years, he was told about a God who loved Him. He knew the Bible stories, went through the church confirmation classes. Attended Sunday school. When he grew up he tried hard to be a good father and husband, and obey all of the rules. Yet, his religion brought him no closer to God, no comfort, no joy and no peace, no satisfaction. Why?

Scowling, frowning God

In one of my workshops Jerry drew a picture of God: a large face, eyes and mouth frowning down at him and holding a measuring stick in his hand. He realized this picture of God also looked just like his father's face. He began to pray about this. He wanted a change.

His father did not give any affirmation or approval or warmth. In fact, he was very disapproving, judgmental, harsh, critical, and legalistic, without grace and mercy. No comfort, no love, a self-centered father. His image of God told me what experiences he had made in his family as a child. Who would want to draw close or trust a God like that?

- ☛ Draw a picture of God in symbolic form: God is like



Identifying our distorted God images

Our views of God can be twisted by the unloving ways we were treated, making us open to sin patterns based on those distortions. The stage of development we were in when the injuries, traumas and neglect occurred influences the distorted ways we see our Heavenly Father.

Which of the following views of God do you identify with?

1. **Reluctant parent.** We had to cry out loud and long before we would be heard. With this view, what little hope and trust we have works hard to get God's attention, and it focuses our mistrust and despair onto God. Sin pattern: can't surrender to God.
2. **Rescuing parent** who saves us from our awfulness. This view focuses our mistrust and despair on ourselves, and we feel like a lowly worm. We passively wait for God to rescue us from a rotten world, instead of working with God to redeem creation. Sin pattern: we hold contempt for ourselves and all of creation.
3. **Wrathful parent** who punished us because we deserve it. Miserable creatures serving a dangerous, punitive God. Sin pattern: since suffering is sent by God (as punishment), we do nothing to prevent it.
4. **Cruel, capricious.** Fear of God is more akin to terror instead of reverential awe. Especially if we have been abused in brutal ways, or parents betrayed us or abandoned us, we cannot submit to a loving God. Sin pattern: we have trouble praying to Our Father; we don't trust men.
5. **Unforgiving and demanding.** God is a scowling task master. Abuse probably took the form of substantial verbal and emotional abuse, and neglect. Sin pattern: we become the responsible one, still performing before a demanding God.
6. **Unfair and selective.** God is capricious and demanding – only with us, not everyone. We feel as if we are different and not-as-good-as other people.
7. **Distant and unavailable.** God keeps his distance, doesn't get directly involved in people's lives, simply cannot be reached.
8. **Kind, but confused.** God is seen as benign, but ineffective in dealing with people. All the chaos in the world confuses poor God.
9. **Angry, punishing.** We view our parents' voices like they were God's voice. We feel like a bad sinner in the hands of an angry God, wondering what punishment He will deal out next.
10. **Killjoy.** God stands ready to punish whatever weak efforts we put forth.
11. **Perfectionist.** We feel God acts like a parent or teacher, loving us more when we do well, and less when we mess up. We make futile efforts, either trying hard to please God or just giving it up as impossible. Sin pattern: We think we have to do "good works" to be good enough to deserve God's love.



Identifying our sin-patterns

Which of the following sin-patterns do you identify with?

1. We can't surrender to God.
2. We hold contempt for ourselves and all of creation, rather than see our self as basically created good – but flawed by original sin. We passively wait for God to rescue us from a rotten world, instead of working with God to redeem creation and bring it to fulfillment.
3. We see suffering as deliberately sent by God and will do nothing to avert it, because it is our just punishment.
4. We over use our will and dictate to God. We will have faith in our will's faith, not faith in God's will, God's love.
5. We never give God our real feelings, our real desires, because if I ask God specifically for what I really want, it is going to be immortal, illegal or fattening. We will pray only in general terms. Perpetually smiling. Ashamed of negative feelings, hide will from God.
6. We have trouble praying to Our Father, because we don't trust men; they are cruel.
7. We perform before a demanding, unforgiving God.
8. We see our self as being different-and-not-as-good-as others & therefore not expect much from Him.
9. We keep our distance, because God doesn't want to get too involved in our lives.
10. We don't bother God, because He is weak and confused by all the chaos in the world.
11. We anticipate & expect God to inflict punishment on us, because we are sinners.
12. We will not try, because God will kill our joy.
13. We focus on doing good works, to be good enough, trying to earn or deserve God's love.
14. We are motivated by our need to be perfect in order to get approval, not by love. We transfer our pattern of performance orientation on to God and open our self to religious spirits.

Clarifying our views or images of God

1. Write ten beliefs you hold about God.
2. When I think of God I feel...
3. God is the most real to me when ...
4. Draw a picture of your earliest impression of God. Put yourself somewhere in the picture.
5. Describe the ten most disturbing doubts about your faith and its meaning.



Rely on the Holy Spirit to bring revelation

We need to rely upon the Holy Spirit to bring us revelation, insight, etc. about the love of God. Revelation comes by the Holy Spirit bringing truth into our hearts

According to the Bible, God's wisdom is hidden (Is 45:3) and we can only know it through revelation. We need revelation to comprehend spiritual truths and realities – we are unable to see it through our intellect and reason.

- That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the true knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling – Ephesians 1:17-18.

Memorize this prayer and pray it daily

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ... that He would grant me according to His riches in glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in my inner man; so that Christ might dwell in my heart through faith; and that I will be rooted and grounded in love, so I may be able to understand what is the breathe and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ." (Ephesians 3:14-20)

Pray for revelation of the love of God

Heavenly Father, Your word says that You cannot lie, and You have made us in your image. You have made us for truth, not lies. I pray that You will open the eyes of my heart to receive Your truth about You and Your love for me. Thank you Lord, In Jesus' name, Amen.

The love of God heals: meditate on these Scriptures

- I will be a Father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18).
- See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are (1 John 3:1).
- We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16).
- And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has in us, God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:16)..
- By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment (1 John 4:17).
- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love (1 John 4:18)
- We love, because He first loved us (1John 4:19).

Affirm God as your Father

The basis of all healing is to affirm the presence of God in you. I encourage you to make the following affirmations aloud many times every day.

- ☛ Affirm aloud: "Abba Father, I belong to you."
- ☛ Affirm aloud: "God is my Father."