

Distorted Views of God¹

Distortion	True View
<p>1. The God of Impossible Expectations</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - Develop their children by focusing on correction and speaking to criticize versus giving encouraging words.</p> <p><i>God</i> - One who is never pleased. His standards are impossible, His expectations beyond reach. You respond to commands from God for service and obedience by self-condemnation. You can't relate to Scriptures about God's unconditional love.</p>	<p>God is my righteousness and He is gracious to me. His expectations have been met and I am declared approved. I am free to learn through success and failure.</p> <p><i>Romans 5:1</i> - Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.</p> <p><i>Psalms 103:13-15</i> - As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field...</p> <p><i>Hebrews 10:14</i> - For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.</p>
<p>2. The Emotionally Distant God</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - Discount or minimize the feelings that their child expresses. Rather than providing emotional closeness by hearing and validating their children's emotions, parents ask the child to make a righteous decision or to stop certain behavior before they identify emotionally with their child. They use phrases such as, "You're too big to cry"; "It's just your feelings that got hurt"; "Don't come out of your room until you have a smile on your face"; "Don't be silly; there is nothing to be afraid of"</p> <p><i>God</i> - Unsympathetic and unfeeling. Cold and interested only in facts and performance. Your questions are, "How could God care about my problem?" or "Does God care about how I feel?"</p>	<p>God is compassionate. He sympathizes (feels) with me in my trials and weaknesses.</p> <p><i>Hebrews 4:15-16</i> - For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in all things as we are yet without sin. Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find help in time of need.</p> <p><i>Proverbs 18:24b</i> - ...But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.</p> <p><i>Psalms 145:18-19</i> - The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth.</p>
<p>3. The Disinterested God</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - busy, full of anxieties about work, money and relationships. They work long hours and are sometimes tired and depressed. Some have learned from their own childhood not to talk and not to feel. These things communicate lack of interest in the child. Some show interest in the child's performance like academics or sports but fail to communicate interest in the child as a person.</p> <p><i>God</i> - Disinterested; too busy to care or listen. You find it hard to believe God is interested in your daily struggles or opinions.</p>	<p>God is my Counselor and Shepherd</p> <p><i>Psalms 139:1,5</i> - O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me. Thou hast enclosed me behind and before, and laid Thy hand upon me.</p> <p><i>Psalms 32:8</i> - I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.</p> <p><i>Psalms 71:17</i> - Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.</p> <p><i>Psalms 23:1-3</i> - The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.</p>

¹ Adapted by Mark Stortvedt from *Recovery From Distorted Images of God* by Dale and Juanita Ryan, InterVarsity Press, 1990.

<p>4. The Abusive God</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - Rather than giving affection, they give violent actions, which leave their children terrified and violated, with no safe place to hide. Rather than using words that build up, they use violent words, sometimes out of control, that communicate that their children are not lovable, valuable or capable. These parents also give harsh punishment instead of guidance. They create experiences of verbal, physical and sexual abuse which leave the child viewing their parent as one who hurts.</p> <p><i>God</i> - easily angered and demanding. You feel that if you don't think, feel or act just right, God stands ready to punish. You believe that His underlying intent is to harm.</p>	<p>God is my healer and defender from harm.</p> <p><i>Psalms 147:2,3</i> - The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.</p> <p><i>Isaiah 61:1-3</i> - The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners; ...To comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting...</p> <p><i>Psalms 18:2</i> - The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.</p>
<p>5. The Unreliable God</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - Don't keep promises, are moody. They may at times get angry over a small thing and other times overlook a big thing. They are sometimes loving, attentive and kind and other times hostile, inattentive, and unkind. Children experience both confusion and disappointment. The child believes that if he tries harder it will be O.K. Eventually, he gives up, deciding that he can't count on people.</p> <p><i>God</i> - one who can't be counted on, who makes promises He may not keep. You perceive that He may love you one day and cast you aside in unaccountable anger another. You feel you cannot count on Him and thus can only count on yourself.</p>	<p>God is faithful and unchanging.</p> <p><i>Lamentations 3:22-23</i> - The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; Great is Thy faithfulness.</p> <p><i>Numbers 23:19</i> - God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man that He should repent; has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?</p> <p><i>Hebrews 13:8</i> - Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes, and forever.</p>
<p>6. The God Who Abandons</p> <p><i>Parents</i> - Separation, divorce, prolonged hospitalization, endless hours at the bar or work. These are experiences of abandonment for a child. One of the parents they look to for survival has left them. The child often concludes that it is his fault, punishment for a past failure, etc., so he feels anxious and takes too much responsibility. The child loses security and lives with a deep fear that others he loves may also leave.</p> <p><i>God</i> - You try very hard to please God, hoping He will not leave. You live with feelings of fear and insecurity.</p>	<p>God is with me and will never fail or leave me.</p> <p><i>Deuteronomy 31:6</i> - Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.</p> <p><i>Luke 15:4-5</i> - What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.</p> <p><i>Matthew 1:23</i> - ...And they shall call His name Immanuel, which translated means, "God with us."</p> <p><i>I Corinthians 13:8a</i> - Love never fails...</p>