

Do You Unknowingly Reject God?

God doesn't need us yet desperately wants us. Why, then, do we who need Him often not want Him in return?

I was taught the song "Jesus Loves Me" as a young child: "Jesus loves me, this I know" Even if you didn't grow up in a church, you probably know how it ends: "for the Bible tells me so."

If you've spent any time in church, you've heard expressed, in some form or another, the idea that God loves us. I believed this for years because, as the song puts it, "the Bible tells me so." The only problem is that it was a concept I was taught, not something I implicitly knew to be true. For years I "got" God's love in my head, checked the right answer on the "what God is like" test, but didn't fully understand it with my heart.

I don't think I'm the only person who has misunderstood God's love. Most of us, to some degree, have a difficult time understanding, believing, or accepting God's absolute and unlimited love for us. The reasons we don't receive, trust, or see His love vary from one person to the next, but we all miss out because of it.

For me, it had much to do with my relationship with my own father.

A Father's Example

The concept of being wanted by a father was foreign to me. Growing up, I felt unwanted by my dad. My mother died giving birth to me, so maybe he saw me as the cause of her death; I'm not sure.

I never carried on a meaningful conversation with my dad. In fact, the only affection I remember came when I was 9 years old: He put his arm around me for about 30 seconds while we were on our way to my stepmom's funeral. Besides that, the only other physical touch I experienced were the beatings I received when I disobeyed or bothered him.

My goal in our relationship was not to annoy my father. I would walk around the house trying not to upset him.

He died when I was 12. I cried but also felt relief.

The impact of this relationship affected me for years, and I think a lot of those emotions transferred to my relationship with God. For example, I tried hard not to annoy God with my sin or upset Him with my little problems. I had no aspiration of being wanted by God; I was just happy not to be hated or hurt by Him.

Don't get me wrong. Not everything about my dad was bad. I really do thank God for him because he taught me discipline, respect, fear and obedience. I also think he loved me. But I can't sugarcoat how my relationship with him negatively affected my view of God for many years.

Thankfully, my relationship with God took a major turn when I became a father myself. After my oldest daughter was born, I began to see how wrong I was in my thinking about God. For the first time I got a taste of what I believe God feels toward us. I thought about my daughter often. I prayed for her while she slept at night. I showed her picture to anyone who would look. I wanted to give her the world.

Sometimes when I come home from work, my little girl greets me by running out to the driveway and jumping into my arms before I can even get out of the car. As you can imagine, arriving home has become one of my favorite moments of the day.

My own love and desire for my kids' love is so strong that it

opened my eyes to how much God desires and loves us. My daughter's expression of love for me and her desire to be with me is the most amazing thing. Nothing compares to being truly, exuberantly wanted by your children.

Through this experience, I came to understand that my desire for my children is only a faint echo of God's great love for me and for every person He made. I am just an earthly, sinful father, and I love my kids so much it hurts. How could I not trust a heavenly, perfect Father who loves me infinitely more than I will ever love my kids?

God is more worthy of trust than anyone else, yet for so long I questioned His love and doubted His care and provision for me.

The very fact that a holy, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, merciful, fair and just God loves you and me is nothing short of astonishing.

The wildest part is that Jesus doesn't *have* to love us. His being is utterly complete and perfect, apart from humanity. He doesn't need me or you. Yet He wants us, chooses us, even considers us His inheritance (see Eph. 1:18). The greatest knowledge we can ever have is knowing God treasures us.

That really is amazing beyond description. The holy Creator sees you as His "glorious inheritance."

The irony is that while God doesn't need us but still wants us, we desperately need God but don't really want Him most of the time. He treasures us and anticipates our departure from this earth to be with Him—and we wonder, indifferently, how much we have to do for Him to get by.

So there is an incalculable, faultless, eternal God who loves the frail beings He made with a crazy kind of love. Even though we could die at any moment and generally think our puny lives are pretty sweet compared to loving Him, He persists in

loving us with unending, outrageous love.

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