

Do You Secretly Harbor This Inaccurate View of God?

I never understood the personality of God until I became a parent. I used to think pleasing God was difficult, like an ever-increasing list of requirements stacked next to my failures, all presided over by a scolding, cranky old judge. I would never add up, try as I might, because I just didn't have what it took to be his star pupil. This would not have felt so hard to bear if I had been a star somewhere else, successful or significant on another plain, but it felt soul-crushing to my hungry heart.

And then I had children. My heart filled up like a rain barrel in a monsoon. My love was sudden, torrential, uncontainable. I was swept downriver, and my view of God flipped end over end. Suddenly I knew, this is how he had always loved me- without reason, without limits or end. It was there all along! My eyes hungrily drank in the proof all around me. His generosity to me, his daughter, could never be tapped out.

What did he expect in return; what would please this God? I now grasped this too with startling clarity: thankfulness. He wanted to watch me open and thoroughly enjoy the gifts in life, just like any parent who plans a surprise. My response is his full reward. Also, because he is so kind and just, he desires that generosity to flow back out of my life to other hungry hearts. It was so terribly simple, I was stunned.

Being with the Father is exhilarating because he is wholehearted. He fully invests himself in the moments with us. We are God's creation, wired for living just the way he does. For us, thankful and wholehearted living is in our DNA. We who know the Lord are filled with his Spirit and designed to embrace every gift: connections, opportunities, relationships (and yes, even material things). Boundless appreciation and

compassion for other people is in our blueprint.

This is what I discovered when my view of God as a cranky old judge fell away. I used to live immersed in the busyness of rules and form, but now I understand him so differently. Our lives run optimally when we live in this authentic manner we were born for. I used to believe finding the narrow path was for fitting in extra church services or cutting out bad television shows, honing my holiness skills. But somehow, for years, all that did was shrink my world down smaller and smaller until my heart felt aloof and shriveled.

If being on the narrow way feels hard and lonely, I have good news ... no, phenomenal news for you. Narrowing your way isn't about rules and form; it's letting go of dull and tired religion to grab onto deeper relationships, thrilling opportunities and connections to other hungry hearts. Slow down your life, and look up at your generous Father. His desire is for you to have a full and rich life because this is what pleases him. Not busier- fuller. It's a flat-out, full-on, breathtaking adventurous gift he has in mind. It's time to open it up!

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