

In many ways, I have transferred my perspective of my father into my view of God. Experience with the visible will do that. Everything we learned as children about how a father acts comes from the foundation of love and acceptance our fathers gave us, so it is no wonder that we can confuse what we saw or never had with what we're told about God's character. It's hard to settle on truth when the past we've experienced firsthand seems so much more real than the words in a book; it's easier to believe that while others may get to have a father/child relationship with God, it's not for us. Besides, is it even something we want?

Life and truth and lies can get muddled up. Lies are birthed in painful experiences, and if your dad was physically, psychologically, or verbally abusive; or if he abandoned you or neglected you, then you more than likely believe your negative thoughts about God to be the truth.

But Jesus, the one closest to his Father, the one who saw God as he was and is and always will be, said otherwise. It's a no-brainer that the one called the Truth is the only one who tells you the truth, so if you think that God doesn't love you or want to live in you or be close to you, it's just not true.

The truth is that God is not like your earthly father.

Even if your father was the best father you could ever imagine having, no one compares to how good and loving God the Father is. He is kind and thoughtful, he is gentle and patient, he is always with us, he is compassionate and gracious, he is slow to anger and quick to love.

Right before Jesus went to the cross, he prayed the prayer that defined his life purpose—that we would be one with the Father, having the same intimacy and love and life in him as Jesus, himself, had. Since his life was sacrificed to bring us into that place of love, we should take another look at the obstacles on the path to our Father's arms.

In the story of the prodigal son, a man had two sons, both of whom he loved dearly. He shared all he had with both of them, he gave them both total freedom to make their own choices, and he celebrated when they chose to be with him. He didn't yell at the son who ran off and refused to talk to him again, and he didn't get mad at the older son for having a massive pity party when the younger son's return was celebrated. He understood both perspectives and responded in love.

In the same way, God responds in understanding and love to all your questions and doubts and pain, but he wants to be your perfect Father; he wants you to be able to receive his flawless love down in the core of your being, because he knows that only then will you be whole and fully alive in him.

God wants to help you push past the lies about him and hear and receive the truth.

REFLECTION

Take some time and check off everything you think is true about God, even if it sounds untrue in your head. If it feels true in your heart then it's still difficult for you to believe God's truth, because you still hurt inside.

God does not love me.

God does not like me.

God does not protect me.

God does not care about me.

God lets bad things happen to teach me lessons.

God doesn't want me because I'm too sinful.

God just puts up with me.

God never wants to talk to me.

God abandons me.

God hates me.

God is scary.

God does not understand me.

God enjoys seeing me in pain.

God does not enjoy my company.

God always lets me down.

FINISH THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES

I am angry, frustrated, hurt, or disappointed with God because

he let ...

he didn't ...

he doesn't ...

he should have ...

In order for a relationship to be rich in love and friendship, both parties have to be real with each other. This means that God wants you to be real with him, so on page 5 is a guide to help you so that you can let him know what's really going on inside at the heart level.