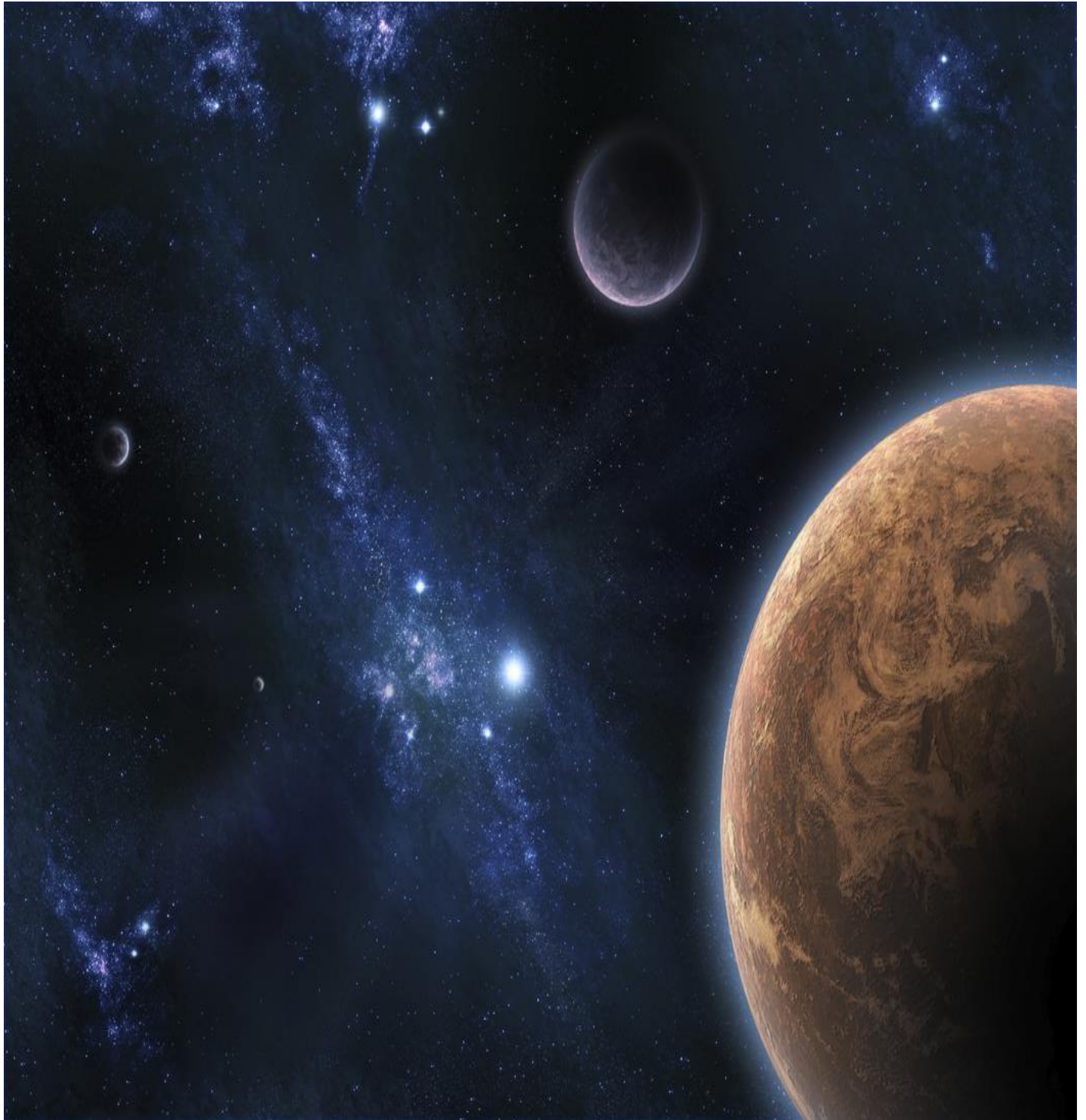


# MYTHS About God



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Steve Flatt

What is God really like? When Jesus came to this world, he debunked all kinds of myths about religion in general. About 80 different times in the gospels Jesus said, "I tell you the truth" And twenty different times he said, "You have heard it said, but now I say unto you."

Some of the myths that Jesus debunked were myths about God. Until Jesus came, God had been viewed as a powerful, but a very distant and aloof entity. He was impersonable and unpleasable.

Jesus taught us the best way to think of God was as our Father. In fact, that was virtually an unknown metaphor until our Jesus came, and he used it over 150 different times. He would say, "Our Father who art in heaven."

There are many people today who may not be able to associate a loving Heavenly Father because their father brings up all kinds of negative memories. In fact, it may conjure up the memory of someone who is distant and aloof, or someone uncaring or unconcerned, maybe even someone who abandoned or abused them.

So even though Jesus revealed God as no one else can, or as no one else has, many people still have myths and misconceptions about what God is like. What is God like? That's such an important question because how you see God is going to determine how you see yourself. How you see God is going to shape the way your life goes.

I want to share with you three very common myths about God, and then as we debunk each of those misconceptions, we're going to tell you the truth about it from God's Word.

## **Myth #1 God is unreasonable.**

That myth goes something like this. God just has so many demands on my life, I can never meet them all. He's unreasonable, unrealistic and a perfectionist. He wants me to be perfect. He wants me to be so good and boring. He doesn't want me to have any fun. He's a killjoy. A lot of people have a picture of God sitting up in heaven with this scowl on his face waiting to bark down at somebody who's having a little fun. Stop that! That's not a new myth. In fact, all of the examples in this lesson originated in the very beginning.

This myth came from the first recorded words from Satan. The scene is the Garden of Eden, that Utopic paradise God created for Adam and Eve, the first two human beings. When God put them there and they had all the food they wanted, all the sources of pleasure, no problems, no toil or no pain. God said, it was a paradise. He told them to take care of the Garden of Eden. He also told them they must not do only one thing, just one rule. There is a tree in the middle called, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were not to eat of that one tree. That's the only thing." (Genesis 3)

Now I want to stop there and ask you a question. Is that unreasonable? God says, "Do anything you want, there's one thing you can't do." Somebody says, "Why did God have that one restriction?" God wanted to provide man with a choice. He wanted Adam and Eve and you and me to love him because we choose to love him, not because we had no choice. God made it as easy as possible. He said, "I'll just give you one wrong possibility, you can do anything else, just don't do that one thing."

You know what human nature is, don't you? You tell us there's one thing we can't do and what are we going to do? You put a sign that says, "Wet Paint! Do Not Touch!" What are most of you going to do? You put a child in a room with a hundred toys and say, "You can play with all those toys, but don't play with the lamp that's up there on the dresser." Especially if it's a little boy, what is he going to do? He's going to go get that lamp. God said there is just one thing I don't want you to do.

But then Satan comes along, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, 'Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?' The woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" (Genesis 3:1) I want you to catch the shift here. Satan has switched the truth for a lie. He has reversed it. He tries to make God appear to be unreasonable. He said, "You know God put you in paradise and he's given you this desire, now he won't let you eat any of it." It is the oldest lie in the world, and yet it still works by the millions every week. Parents, have you ever said to a child, "Yes, you can go out and ride your bike, but stay on this block? Don't go down to that busy street now." Or, have you ever told your teenager, "Hon, have a good time, but be back by 11:30." Sometimes they respond,

"Sighhhhh! You never let me do anything. You never let me have any fun. You just won't let me do anything, any way."

Wait a minute. Have you said they couldn't have any fun? Have you said everything is off limits? No, you just put one thing off limits, but they're saying that's unreasonable. It's unreasonable for you to put any limits on my life. You're a killjoy. You're not being fair. That's the same thing we do to God.

The **myth is that God is unreasonable**. The truth is God is not only reasonable, he is compassionate and considerate. Everything he says, everything he does for us, any restrictions he places on us are there because of his love. The Bible says that every good and perfect gift is from God. You and I enjoy thousands of gifts and every one of them is from God. But when God puts a restriction on it, it's for our protection.

Let me ask you a question. Is water a gift from God? Sure it is, isn't it? You can't live without it. Your body is like 96% water. Can water be misused to harm you? Sure you can drown in it. How about fire? Is fire a gift from God? Well, of course fire is a gift from God. We couldn't live without it, it warms us, it fuels machinery. Can fire be misused?

Absolutely. Is food a gift from God? Absolutely. Can food be misused? Absolutely. Is sex a gift from God? Absolutely. Can sex be misused? Absolutely. People though in our generation complain and say, "God is just unreasonable. He gives us these sexual drives and sexual desires and then he puts limitations on it. There shouldn't be any of those, I should be free to do that. Don't you think God knows more than you know?"

Have you ever stopped to imagine, what if everybody used sex the way God intended? Have you ever stopped to think about that? Have you ever stopped to think about how the world would be? There would be no A.I.D.S., there would be no syphilis, no gonorrhea or no venereal disease. There would be no sexual abuse of anybody, especially little children, no rapes, no molestation, no broken homes from infidelity, no babies born out of wedlock and no forced marriages. Murders would be reduced drastically. There would be no lifelong guilt and shame from fornication. Have you ever thought about that? Now you tell me, whose plan is reasonable? Whose plan makes more sense?

"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassion never fail."

(Lamentations 3:22) God says you can have all the sex you want, it's my gift to you. But, He insist you reserve it only for the person you're married to for your own physical, emotional, and spiritual protection.

Now somebody says, but God is being unreasonable. Listen to me, write it down. Anytime God says, "No," it's because he loves me. When Satan whispers in our ear, he's saying, "No," just because he doesn't want you to enjoy life, that's one of the biggest lies that can ever be told.

"Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart." (Psalm 37:4) Does that sound like a killjoy? Or "put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment." (1 Timothy 6:17) Does that sound like somebody who doesn't want us to have any fun? How about, "He who did not spare his own Son, ... how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32) Is that an unreasonable Father? No. For every "No" God says, he has a thousand yeses. Our God is a compassionate and considerate Father.

## **Myth #2. God is unreliable.**

That myth says that you can't trust God, he'll lie to you, he's inconsistent and he won't tell you the truth. Again, that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Eve says, "But God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' 'You will not surely die,' the serpent said to the woman. 'For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'" (Genesis 3:3-5) See what the devil says, "Eve, don't you know why God doesn't want you to eat that, he doesn't care about you. He just doesn't want you to be as smart as he is. Eve, don't you understand?"

Right there, by the way are the two phases of temptation. I don't care what kind of temptation you ever face. They are **doubt**, and **deception**. In any area of life, the devil tries to get you to doubt what God says, "Did God really say you couldn't eat of any tree? and Satan will use his own lie and it's basically always the same. "Oh, it won't hurt anything, everybody is doing it, it's okay to do it just once." He plants his lie, the doubt, the deception, and then comes his destruction.

Here's the truth. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17) You better believe God is reliable, in fact, he is consistent. He is the only, ultimate, consistent thing in this universe. Now you may have some things, or even some people that you know you can depend upon, but even the best of those will ultimately fail. The only really consistent thing in the universe is Jehovah God. Your heavenly Father is the one thing that you can count on.

If you were raised in a home where you had a very unpredictable Father, that when you came home, you didn't know if he was going to hug you or slug you. You didn't know if he was going to be silent or violent or be drunk or sober. The sad reality is inconsistent fathers rear insecure children. Some of you are battling this for decades later and I feel for you.

I can't go back and change your father. I cannot get you over that insecurity with one touch of my finger, but there's something that will. You have to put it in the very core of your heart and at the center of your belief. You serve a heavenly Father who is absolutely consistent. He's not going to like you one day and not like you the next. He's not going to pat you on the back one minute and kick you the next. You have a hard time not

thinking of him that way because of the projections you have from your past. The problem is, we don't like to spend time with inconsistent people. If you have somebody in your life who is inconsistent, you just want to get away from them. You don't want to be around them. If you think God is that way, You will never pray. If you think God's that way, you don't want to worship Him. You may go to church, but you'll get there dragging and kicking. You don't want to go, if you think God is unreliable. You just don't want to have anything to do with him. Our God is not moody or temperamental, He is always consistent.

I did a very good study not long ago that found the number one reason that kids rebel against their parents is because of resentment. The number one cause of resentment is broken promises. Dad, you promised you'd do that. Mom, you promised you'd do this. Broken promises led to resentment and resentment to rebellion. The great news is our God is not that kind of father. I could give you 50 verses that confirm the reliability and the consistency of God, but my favorite is just wrapped up in the very blunt statement "It is impossible for God to lie." (Hebrews 6:18) Just mark it down. If God says it, it's the truth.

One thing I want you to know is that this consistent, compassionate Father has a love for you that's never going to change. I don't care where you go, I don't care what you do, and I don't care what you've done. The love that God Almighty has for you never waivers. "What shall separate us from the love of Christ, famine, peril, nakedness, sword, persecution, death?" ... "No, in all these things we're more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:35,37) Remember the parable of the prodigal son? Remember the daddy that ran to the boy on the way back home? In what part of that parable was the father loving the son? The answer is all the way through it. It didn't matter where the boy was. The father never stopped loving the boy. He loved him consistently all the way through it.

### **Myth #3 God is unconcerned about me.**

That lie causes major unhappiness. The idea is that God is unconcerned with me because I am insignificant. There are six billion people on the face of the earth and God has got so much to worry about, he's got to worry about war and famine and starving children. He is not interested in me. Satan comes in on the heels of that thinking and says to you, "Who do you think you are? What do you think you're doing praying to God with your petty little request?" Folks, this is one of the most destructive myths out there. If you buy into it, it will just lead you totally away from God. That's the myth. The truth of the matter is, our God is a caring Father.

Look back to Genesis 3, Remember Adam and Eve sinned. Eve ate first, and then Adam ate after that, and so they sinned. Let me ask you a question: When did God know about the sin? Remember he is the omniscient God. God knew about the sin the second it happened. He may have been up in heaven, but he knew that it happened. "Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?'" (Genesis 3:8) Folks, I love that, and I want to make sure you see it. Now to answer that, they come out and say, "We were naked, and we hid ourselves." God said, "How did you know you were naked? Did you eat of the tree?" Remember this people, whenever God asks a question in Scripture, it's not for the purpose of information, he already knows. Whenever God asks a question in Scripture, he is trying to reveal to the person he is asking what the truth is so that they will be affected by it.

God already knew they had sinned, but he came to the garden just like he had always done. He walked through the trees, and he called out to man, "Where are you Adam? Where are you? I'm looking for you." I want you to know something folks, our God has never stopped doing that. He still comes walking among us, and he calls for us incessantly.

From day one, God is looking to help man, even when man was trying to hide from him. If you think God is unconcerned about you, read Matthew 10:29-31 "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." He knows the number of hairs on your head, I might add, he also knows the true color. It says, if he knows when one of those sparrows fall, how much more, and I've underlined in my Bible the words, much more, will he care about you. You're worth more than all the sparrows because you're made in the very image of God. You know the myth out there is that God is distant, he is the manager of the universe and he doesn't care much about your daily needs, he may not even know your name. He'll just look it up one day at Judgment. He's got a big file.

We've epitomized that kind of thinking. Remember the Bette Midler song that came out during the Gulf War, a beautiful song, "From a distance, God is watching you, from a distance." It's a pretty song, but it's a lie, it's a myth. God is not watching you from a distance. God is watching you up close and personal. He knows everything about you. And he cares more for you than anybody else ever could.

"If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." (John 14:23) That was a prophecy of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who would indwell the heart of the obedient believer. Isn't that great? He said, "You don't have to worry about me being near you. I'm going to be in you." That's about as close as you can get. I'm going to be in you, and he is for all those who in obedience to the gospel accept the good news of Jesus.

One final thing when God looked at the serpent, who was Satan he was incensed. He said to that serpent, "From her offspring there is going to come one, and you will bruise his heel, but he will crush his head." (Genesis 3:15) Those of you who know the Bible recognize that's the first time that the coming of Jesus Christ was prophesied. Our Lord would have his heel bruised but he would crush Satan's head. Do you think our God is not compassionate, not consistent, not caring? He walked in the garden; He sent His son and he will take care of all your problems. But you must allow Him to do so.

Maybe some myths about God have been debunked for you. Maybe you see the Father the way he really is, caring, considerate, compassionate and consistent. Maybe you've bought into some lie that's kept you from him up to this point, maybe you didn't have the model at home of what a father should be. All that is in the past. What counts is what you are going to do with the Lord and Savior from this moment forward. I hope if you are not a Christian, today will be the day you confess Jesus and for the forgiveness of your sins be buried with him in baptism into his own death, burial, and resurrection in order for you to be raised a new creation to walk in that newness of life. If you need to return back to God, then I hope you will have the courage to do that and to embrace this wonderful Father. Steve Flatt Amazing Grace Lesson #1245