

### 333 *The God I don't believe in*

'Our father', Jesus started, when he was asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' So how did Jesus view his heavenly Father? Therefore how should we view God?

Rightly or wrongly, I've come to view God as the ultimate parent,<sup>[107,214]</sup> and a God like that, who loves us so much, will do whatever it takes to enable us to come into that love. So when a human parent has children that mess up – small time or big time – what is their main concern? Is it to punish them for their wrongdoing?

No, that parent will do whatever it takes to bring that child back into their love. And every child is different, so what helps one child might turn another child away. But overall when your kids mess up, you just want to clean them up; you want to help them keep away from the negative influences in their lives; and you desperately want to stop them hurting each other, right? I got most cross with my two boys when they were hurting each other.

Now who is this God that I *don't* believe in anymore? And I'll state this in an extreme way, but if any element of this is true in your experience, please compare it with the God that Jesus portrayed, especially in the prodigal father who had two very different sons.

God is an angry deity who punishes people when they sin. He (this God is certainly not a 'she'!) needs to be propitiated – his anger needs to be turned away, but how? Well, because this God also loves us, he has worked out a way – a very clever, self-sacrificing way.

I don't need to explain the mechanism that God uses; we've rehearsed it a million times in our churches, but be assured that this is the *only* way God can wash away our sins. How do I know? Because we've studied our Bibles assiduously over the centuries and we've developed our systematic theology so that we can be absolutely certain how God works.

Look into the Old Testament – there's that angry God needing to be propitiated by sacrifice; indeed, the father of our faith, Abraham, was willing to sacrifice his own son – can you believe that?! But the OT also has the seeds of the loving parent view, all ready for Jesus to explain and exemplify for his followers – for us. Hence he clashed big time with the Pharisees who were propagating the angry God image.

I don't know, historically, when we lost Jesus' loving parent and got back the Pharisees' angry deity, but we did.

But ironically God loves us sooo much that he is even willing to use this *distorted view* of an angry deity to enable people to come into the loving relationship for which we were created.

How much better it would be if we could go back to Jesus' view of God as the ultimate loving parent!

Please let it be so.