

DISTORTED

My daughter Amber looks a lot like me. I mean a lot. But no worries if you're feeling sorry for the girl, because it turns out that the female version of my DNA, combined with that of my wife, is quite beautiful.

Once when Amber was traveling with me internationally, a customs agent asked her with a tone of suspicion, "What is your relation to this man." Amber got all nervous and said, "Aaaa, he's my dad." The agent said something about me looking too young to be her father, for which I thanked her, of course. But she was not buying our story. So without speaking a word to one another, Amber and I posed a twin-profile for the officer and told her to take a good look at our faces, especially our identical noses.

The agent said, "Yep, you're definitely related," and waved us on our way.

I've apologized to Amber over the years for her distinct likeness to me, but she doesn't seem to mind a bit. One time I noticed in her bedroom a photo of me when I was about twelve. The resemblance was striking. So I asked, "Hey Amber, does it bother you that you look so much like your dad?"

I'll never forget her girlish giggle and the answer she gave me. "No, Daddy. I like looking like you."

Wow!

If you're a father or mother, you must know how sweet those simple words were to hear.

But I wonder how many people feel that way about God?

I mean think about it: I know this is hard for some of us to swallow, but the Bible repeatedly tells us that God is our "Father." Yeah. Our papa. Our daddy. Even Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven. . ."

That's all fine and good, but it raises a serious question, doesn't it?

Is the God I believe in the kind of FATHER I would WANT to be like?

For some of us there might need to be some serious counseling sessions involved in that one.

But think about it. I'm not talking about God's physical appearance, of course. I'm talking about His character—the way He thinks, and feels, and behaves.

Is the picture of God you hold in your heart one that attracts you or repels you? In your mind's eye, in your belief system, is God beautiful? Do you want to be like Him? Or, rather, does the idea of God shut you down emotionally?

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I believe this is the most important question we can ever ask about God, because the fact is, our world is filled with popular images of God that either drive people into religious slavery or into angry atheism, to serve God out of fear or to hate the very idea of God.

Contrary to popular religious opinion, atheism is not the worst thing in the world. Bad religion is. And bad Christianity is at the top of the list. It's so bad that the Bible calls it, "Babylon, the mother of whores." Wow, now that's some strong language. The Bible then goes on to warn people about false religion and urge people to run from it. The reason why is quite obvious, isn't it? When those who claim to know God best convey diabolical things about Him, terrible distortions of God's character are inevitable. The problem is so serious that historians have suggested that atheism is the bastard child of the church, born into our world as a violent intellectual and emotional reaction against the church's ugly misrepresentations of God.

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But let me suggest another possibility: Maybe the one and only true God is so beautiful that I would find myself falling in love with Him if I knew Him as He really is! "Babylon is fallen," the Bible says. "Come out of her, my people." In other words, flee from every false picture of God into the arms of the one and only true God, who just happens to be beautiful in the extreme.

I'm so glad my daughter Amber doesn't mind looking like me. After all, she has no choice in the matter. But with God we all do have a choice.

So I'm really glad that He's the kind of Father I want to be like.

How about you?

Is God beautiful in your eyes?