



God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters

By John Bishop

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God is not a bigger version of your earthly father.

When you hear the word “father,” do you think of someone who is loving...or angry? Someone who is pleased with you...or constantly disappointed? Someone who is always available...or someone who is too busy, preoccupied, or distant? When you think of “Father God,” what images come to mind?

Regardless of the type of father you grew up with—or without—it is likely that your view of God is influenced by the relationship you had with your father. Author John Bishop wants to help you discover that God is not just like your dad. Instead, God is the Father revealed in Scripture, where the truth is clear. God is a father who is:

- always there
- up close and personal
- fully pleased
- in complete control
- completely safe

Filled with biblical insight and practical tools for reflection, healing, and restoration, *God Distorted* will enable you to break free from the lies of the enemy and see your heavenly Father as He truly is.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #229450 in Books
- Brand: WaterBrook Press
- Published on: 2013-05-21
- Released on: 2013-05-21
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.95" h x .65" w x 5.94" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

“John Bishop tears away those misconceptions, distorted views, and protective walls we have in the way of a dynamic relationship with God. By highlighting how significantly the relationship with our earthly father distorts our view of our heavenly Father, *God Distorted* leads readers on a path of healing and better understanding of God the Father.”

—Mark Batterson, *New York Times* best-selling author of *The Circle Maker*

“John Bishop writes from his personal life and his years as a pastor to describe the incredible importance of accepting our Father’s love into the deep places of our lives. So many of our challenges come back to how we view God, and John clears the way for us to see God in all of his power, love, and fame. This is a powerful book and a great resource.”

—Jud Wilhite, author of *Pursued* and senior pastor of Central Christian Church, Las Vegas

“A. W. Tozer asserted, “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” *God Distorted* helps us discover and replace the warped perceptions with God’s perfections. Writing with great vulnerability out of his personal journey, John guides us to letting go the ‘daddy damaged’ idols so we can experience the joy that comes with knowing the heavenly Father with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Working through the book will renew love of the Father, joy in Jesus, and peace through the Spirit.”

—Gerry Breshears, professor of theology, Western Seminary, Portland

“John Bishop has written a book that will bring healing, encouraging, and restoration to anyone who’s wrestled to reconcile their earthly father with our heavenly Father. This is a book that will breathe hope and life into your world.”

—Margaret Feinberg (www.margaretfleinberg.com), author of *Wonderstruck* and *Scouting the Divine*

“The message of *God Distorted* is simple but profound: No matter how good or bad your earthly father was, you haven’t truly found home until you’re in the arms of your heavenly Father. John Bishop’s message is one of hope, healing, and restoration.”

—Jim Daly, president, Focus on the Family and author of *ReFocus: Living a Life that Reflects God’s Heart*

“John Bishop is passionate about helping us let go of our distorted image of God and embrace Him as our perfect Father. John’s transparency about his experience as a son, a father, and a pastor will encourage you as you seek to replace broken paradigms with biblical faith.”

—Steven Furtick, lead pastor, Elevation Church, Charlotte, and author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *Greater*

“*God Distorted* provides insight to a hurting generation. John is very transparent in this book, and if we had more Christian leaders this transparent talking about some of these things, we would have a better church, community, and nation. We must acknowledge, accept, and work on these problems we carry within us. We must allow God to change us, and then we can help change others. I was with Pastor John Bishop and spoke at his church on Father’s Day, and following the service we had a very quick lunch—the reason being that he needed to rush off so he could spend time with his son. That was John’s priority, and it made a strong impression on me.”

—Nicky Cruz, evangelist and author

“*God Distorted* challenges your view of God. John Bishop helps you see God for who He is, not who you imagined Him to be.”

—Kerry Shook, founding pastor of Woodlands Church, Houston, and coauthor of the national bestsellers *One Month to Live* and *Love at Last Sight*

“Everyone has a view of God, a perception of who He is and what He wants in our lives. Some see Him as a loving creator; others may see Him as a detached deity. But no matter what our view of God is, we all have the same basis for our perception. In *God Distorted*, John Bishop helps readers peel back the layers of their past and discover the foundation of their perception of God – their experience with their earthly father. And through open, honest, and powerful examples, John helps readers discover what it takes to overcome the distortions and instead gain a clear image of God.”

—Ed Young, pastor of Fellowship Church and author of *Outrageous, Contagious Joy*

About the Author

JOHN BISHOP is the founding and senior pastor of Living Hope Church, which has grown from four families to nearly five thousand weekly attendees. John has a master's degree in leadership and evangelism, and is an international speaker with a passion to both encourage and challenge pastors to propagate what matters most to the heart of God: reaching the lost. John lives with his wife, Michelle, and their three children in Battle Ground, Washington.

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I am broken, just like many of you who by God's grace are reading this book about dads, children, and God. As much as I knew my earthly dads (yes, plural), I have learned to know God even better. By no stretch of the imagination or résumé am I an expert on parenting, or on the role of fathers in the lives of their children, or on the character of God as the perfect Father. However, having had four very different earthly fathers, being the father of three very different kids, and serving as a pastor for over twenty years, I at least have a broad, varied, and hopefully helpful perspective in being both child and father. I was the child dreaming of the perfect father, and I finally found him in the God who I now know was always there.

Writing this book has been an experience full of irony that isn't lost on me. Take today, for example. This morning I got a Father's Day card from my daughter Katie and son-in-law Jordan. I am sitting here staring at a card that says so much and ends with "I love you, Daddy. Forever and always—Katie Lee." But just moments ago I hung up the phone with my son, David, who is currently incarcerated at our local county jail. He had to end our call abruptly because he was being put in lockdown. Talk about emotional whiplash! Honestly, God. Really?

To hear David's voice and his words, "Dad, I love you and will call you when I can." Yeah, those words break the heart of a daddy. That's when the irony hurts. Who am I to write about fathers when I am mad at myself as a dad, aggravated by the residual issues from the fathers I had, and frustrated with God and others? I know David has made wrong choices. Lots of them. I get it in my head, but I really have a hard time being okay with it in my heart. But then God lets me know that this is exactly why He wants me to write this book. He has me right where I need to be, learning exactly what I need to learn, in order to share what He wants me to share.

In life—not just as a pastor, but as a dad—I have heard more stories than I can count about brokenness, pain, anger, resentment, and insecurity that are directly related to dysfunctional father relationships. I have plenty of my own! I don't have all the answers, but I have learned some things that have helped me both cope and become better at being a dad.

I can't explain every situation, but I can empathize with most. Whether you are fifteen or seventy-five, you are still the child of your dad. The wounds of a dad, admitted or not, can bring so much pain and confusion to the heart of a child.

I cannot change your past, but I am praying about your today and am hoping that the words in this book will help you walk toward a new future. Have you been broken and hurt? I have too. Have you felt controlled, abandoned, ignored, or rejected? I have too. I get it. I don't necessarily know more than anyone else, but I am willing to share with you my journey to healing, in the hopes it may benefit you in some way.

I am a child who was abused, abandoned, and left. I am a father who is trying to be a better father. But most importantly, I am a child of God who has learned to be healed and be a healer of others.

Why This Book? Why Now? Why Me?

It is my life's passion to help people meet the God who loves them so much He died for them. But often we have to begin by tearing down a wall of preconceived ideas and distorted images of God that have been created by the images projected by our earthly fathers.

I am a confessed accidental pastor who somehow by God's grace has been blessed to be part of a church that has seen over eight thousand people baptized in eight years and has seen tens of thousands changed by grace and for the glory of only God. We are in a part of America where people don't really want to go to church. In my life personally and in our lives corporately, God has been distorted into something that isn't right. The God distortion needs to be changed. It needs to be different for our generation—a generation that has been broken by dad issues and needs to be restored and reclaimed by God. Fathers—and the lack of them—have in many cases tainted our view of God and prevented relationship with Him. I have dedicated my life as a pastor to knowing God and making Him known. I don't care what struggle you have or what God looks like in your mind, but I can say without hesitation that the God I have come to know is the answer to the deepest longing of your heart.

My intent is not to make fathers feel or look bad, but to help us as children identify the fears and insecurities we still carry as scars from our childhood. I have been challenged as a father while writing this book, and I am now determined—passionate, even—to do better as a result of what I have learned.

What Is This Book?

This book is split into three parts. In the first part, we identify eight different types of fathers. You are probably going to recognize yourself and your family members somewhere in here. It's not always easy reading about what goes on in the home, how children develop emotionally and relationally, and what impact that has on their God-image. Some of the stories are extreme examples, and you may see your father as a milder version of the one described. Or you may even see Dad as a combination of more than one description.

In part 2, we begin a journey of discovering who our heavenly Father truly is, as defined in God's Word. What aspect of His character specifically speaks to the wounds of our past? What does God promise that can heal the deep fears that drive our dysfunctional behaviors and steal our joy? This is where you meet a God who loves you more than anyone ever has, could, or will, in spite of the things you might hate about yourself.

Part 3 is where we get practical. It is my sincere hope that here you will experience healing and then bring

restoration to the lives of those around you. Maybe you feel constantly discouraged by the Enemy and want to fight back. Perhaps you struggle to live differently, even as a child of God. When you learn, pray, and perhaps cry, and when hope is rebirthed in your heart, maybe you will see the need to forgive someone for hurting you. This section addresses all of these issues, and more, giving you all the tools you need to do better than you have before.

Following part 3 is a study guide to help you work through the fears that distort your view of God. That will be the opportunity for you to pray, read the Bible, and allow God to speak healing into your heart.

I pray that you will, by the end of these pages, see God more clearly and understand His unconditional love and acceptance of you, right as you are today.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ruth Brown:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Guide is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each reserve has different aim as well as goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are really reading whatever they consider because their hobby is reading a book. What about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, man feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you will need this God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters.

Margaret Morales:

People live in this new time of lifestyle always try and and must have the extra time or they will get lot of stress from both daily life and work. So , when we ask do people have spare time, we will say absolutely sure. People is human not really a huge robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity do you possess when the spare time coming to a person of course your answer will certainly unlimited right. Then ever try this one, reading textbooks. It can be your alternative within spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is usually God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters.

Cheryl Waller:

Are you kind of busy person, only have 10 or even 15 minute in your day to upgrading your mind skill or thinking skill possibly analytical thinking? Then you have problem with the book in comparison with can satisfy your small amount of time to read it because all of this time you only find publication that need more time to be study. God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters can be your answer given it can be read by an individual who have those short time problems.

Jodi Dunn:

Some people said that they feel bored when they reading a reserve. They are directly felt this when they get a half regions of the book. You can choose the actual book God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters to make your own personal reading is interesting. Your own personal skill of reading proficiency is developing when you such as reading. Try to choose simple book to make you enjoy to study it and mingle the feeling about book and reading especially. It is to be first opinion for you to like to open a book and learn it. Beside that the publication God Distorted: How Your Earthly Father Affects Your Perception of God and Why It Matters can to be your brand-new friend when you're truly feel alone and confuse using what must you're doing of the time.

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