



God's Baby Talk

A friend of mine sent me an e-mail about a boy who lives in California. He had been given a third grade homework assignment to "Explain God." Herewith are some of his observations about God:

One of God's main jobs is making people. He makes them to replace the ones that die so there will be enough people to take care of things here on earth. He doesn't make grown-ups, just babies. I think because they are smaller and easier to make. That way, he doesn't have to take up his valuable time teaching them to talk and walk. He can just leave that to mothers and fathers.

God's second most important job is listening to prayers. An awful lot of this goes on since some people, like preachers, pray at times besides bedtime. God doesn't have time to listen to the radio or TV because of this.

Jesus is God's son. He used to do all the hard work like walking on water and performing miracles and trying to teach the people. They finally got tired of him preaching to them and they crucified him. But he was good and kind like his Father and he told his Father that they didn't know what they were doing and to forgive them and God said okay.

Isn't that great?

Calvin once said that the Bible was God's "baby talk" and implied that God, in order to communicate to finite beings, had to "get the fodder down" so we could understand his truth.

Needless to say, if that is true (and it is), when we talk to him, describe him to others or teach people about what he is like, it must not be dissimilar to that little boy's comments about God.

I think God isn't nearly as angry as some of his people are when we get it wrong. How can a loving father be

angry at his child for having a childlike mind, making childlike efforts or having childlike thoughts?

A father expects his children will get it wrong, do it wrong and say it wrong. Anger at a child for being a child is the stuff of which abuse is made, and God is not a child abuser.

I suspect God, on occasion—while I was preaching my heart out from a pulpit, doing a broadcast, teaching a class or writing a book—called his angels over and said, "Hey, I want you to hear this. Isn't that funny? He got it wrong again, but he's so serious and he is, after all, doing his best. That's my kid! Isn't my child something else!?"

Perhaps God didn't mind at all that I got it partly wrong. After all, it wasn't as if I were going to mess up some grand plan of his because I, a little preacher and a peon, didn't do it the way he would have done it.

Children are often too little to do a lot of damage—and certainly not to the father's ego or—if he is a good father—his love.

And that brings me to the point that I'm still learning. I'm a teacher and the "downside" of being a teacher is that one wants to straighten out every spurious view, correct all error and make sure that everybody completely understands what is being taught.

That assumes, of course, that the teacher has it right and, if the Scripture is true, the teacher never gets it all right:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'" (Isaiah 55:8-9).

If a teacher isn't very careful, he or she can become a royal pain. Not only that, if one is a teacher of God's stuff,

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FREE FROM GRAVITY

PTM Launches New Web Ministry

New web ministry combines blog, videos and many other resources

In late January, after many months of work and preparation, PTM launched an exciting new, contemporary ministry on its website. *Free From Gravity* is an interactive site incorporating PTM resources—*Conversations About Jesus* (our monthly webcast for young people hosted by Greg Williams), videos, FAQs—and most notably, a lively and challenging blog hosted by new team member Paul Angone.

The blog will feature honest, authentic conversations about faith, Christ and grace. Paul Angone comments: "These are words that Christians use—often without really understanding the reality of the words. But we want to talk about them in a different way. We want to dialog about them in an authentic and truthful manner—about what's really going on in our lives—the struggles and paradoxes we are facing—and how God constantly accepts us no matter what. We want to throw away the masks and talk about faith and grace without all the religious junk that weighs us down."

Why *Free From Gravity*? Because gravity is an apt description of the weight we feel from religion—the heaviness of religious expectations—the rules, dos and don'ts, going through the motions of faith. God offers us freedom from this gravity—the law that holds us down—if we'll just get out of the way.

Religion takes itself seriously—but this site will be fun. According to Greg Albrecht, "We want to help people discover (or rediscover) the joy of living in God's grace—experiencing the excitement of what our faith really means."

To visit our new *Free From Gravity* ministry, just go to www.ptm.org/free—or go to www.ptm.org and follow the links.

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he asked me...

it is inevitable that the teacher is going to get it wrong sometimes. There is nothing worse than a teacher who is a royal pain, except a teacher who is a royal pain who is wrong.

Am I suggesting that we have all gotten it wrong, that nobody can know the truth and therefore we should simply stand in a circle, hold hands, look at our navels and "share our feelings" about God?

Are you crazy!?! There are eternal verities and they are always propositional and true. The Bible is absolutely true. God has made some things quite clear and those eternal truths must always be proclaimed and taught by all of us.

However, there are other places where we could be a bit more humble about what we teach, say and believe to be true.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church has a great slogan for their denomination: *In Essentials, Unity; In Non-essentials, Liberty; In all Things, Charity.*

Our loving father isn't angry. Perhaps the children on the playground could do with a bit less anger themselves.

When our daughters were children, Anna would keep pictures they drew in school or Sunday School on the refrigerator door. (She does that now with the grandchildren). Some of those pictures were ugly-on-ugly. In fact, they were so bad, half the time I had no idea what it was that the girls were attempting to draw.

The shapes were never quite right, the drawings of animals (or houses, or people) looked childish and out of kilter, and frankly, it was hard to find anything good to say about those drawings.

But you know something? It didn't matter. The beauty was not in the pictures but in the love of the one who hung them on the refrigerator door.

God has a very big refrigerator in heaven. A lot of your ugly pictures are hanging there—right under mine. ☐

—Steve Brown

THE PLAIN TRUTH