

You Are God's Two-Year-Old: The Authority of Scripture, Part 1

By Coty Pinckney, May 2013

Over three blog posts, we'll consider our position before God's revelation in Scripture. This post may not seem to have much to do with scriptural authority, but be patient; we'll get there.

How do you picture your relationship to God? What images do you use?

- Perhaps you use a business image: He's the boss, you're His right hand man.
- Or a political image: He's President, you're His Secretary of State.
- Or a sports image: He's the head coach, you're His quarterback.
- Or a military image: He's a general, you're a colonel.
- Or a family image: He's a big older brother – stronger, wiser, more experienced than you, while you are His faithful and loyal younger brother.

Does something disturb you about all those images? I hope so. Surely the difference between God and me is far greater than the difference between Barack Obama and John Kerry.

So to get this right, do we just need to diminish our role in these images?

- Business: He's the boss, you run a local branch.
- Politics: He's the President, you're a congressman in His party.
- Sports: He's the coach, you're the second string defensive tackle.
- Military: He's a general, you're an inexperienced lieutenant.
- Family: He's the father, you're His teenage son.

Do those changes solve the problem?

Or do these images still make you too smart, too important, too able compared to God?

How *should* you picture your relationship to God?

How *do* you picture your relationship to God?

Consider [Psalm 8:3-4](#):

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

As soon as we consider the heavens, the moon, the billions and trillions of stars, the extent of the galaxies, we have to conclude that if they have a Creator, we are indeed minuscule in comparison to Him. I can't possibly be His advisor. I can't possibly be his quarterback, or even His branch manager.

But if these images make us appear as too close to God, what image should we use?

Consider yourself God's two-year-old.

This is one way to understand Psalm 131:

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time forth and forevermore.

The psalmist thinks of himself as a child – perhaps a two-year-old. Whether or not this child is still nursing, at the moment pictured he has finished eating. He is well satisfied. He is clean. He is secure. He is caressed. He is loved. Surrounded by all of Mommy's welcome smells, embraced by her warmth,

he is completely secure. Completely at rest. Completely content. All he wants is right there: He has his Mommy. He has his Daddy. They provide. He trusts them. He is confident in them.

That is how Scripture says we should be before God.

That's the picture of Psalm 131. What else do we know about two-year-olds from our own experience?

I have six children. We thus spent six years with a two-year-old in the house (and more than thirteen years with at least one child two or under). Here are five characteristics of two-year-olds I have observed:

- They are completely dependent; they will die apart from the attention of their parents or other adults.
- They assert themselves, they test their limits, pushing those in authority over them to define what they really mean.
- They are perfectly able to think, and make surprising connections and observations; nevertheless, they have many misunderstandings and misapprehensions.
- They simply are not able to understand many things that their parents say; in order to communicate effectively, their parents have to talk in a way the two-year-old can understand.
- They also cannot understand many things about the world around them that their parents know; thus, they have to learn to listen to their parents, to trust them, to obey them.

With those characteristics in mind, let's turn from two-year-olds to John Calvin. He writes:

The majesty of God is . . . far above the reach of mortals who are like worms crawling upon the earth (*Institutes* 2.6.4).

So how can a worm have any relationship to such a God? That doesn't seem possible.

Calvin continues:

The Father, who is infinite in himself, becomes finite in the Son because he has accommodated himself to our capacity, that he may not overwhelm our minds with the infinity of his glory. (emphasis added)

We can have a relationship to God because God chooses to make that possible. We are nothing before Him. We are insignificant – unless He gives us significance. But He has chosen to reveal Himself through redemptive history; through His living Word, Jesus Christ; through His written Word, the Bible.

He accommodates "Himself to our capacity." He speaks to us in language we can understand. He uses images from everyday life so that we can know all we need to know of Him and His work.

Commenting on this passage of the *Institutes*, Derek Thomas links this idea with the image of us as toddlers:

What we know of God we know only in part, only to the extent to which he has revealed himself. And even that revelation is just so much "baby-talk" and we must always remember that it is so. (emphasis added)

"Just so much baby talk."

When God speaks to us, He speaks like we speak to toddlers. Consider: When you speak to a two-year-old, how do you talk?

From Beth's first pregnancy, we decided we weren't going to speak what's often called baby talk – "wad dus da widdle bebee wunt do do?" We were going to enunciate clearly, just as when we would speak to each other. For we wanted to communicate clearly to our children, and to teach them how to speak clearly.

That's what God does for us. "Baby talk" in this sense is not a distortion of speech. Rather, it is speaking in terms and in words that can be understood by the little one.

Now, in our home we explicitly pushed our children to grow in their understanding. One way we did this was by reading them books that challenged them. But at two-years-old, we didn't read them *War and Peace*; rather, we read *The Narnian Chronicles*.

That's how God speaks to us.

We are two-year-olds before Him. There are many things we cannot understand. If He explained to us the intricacies of His creation, of His thoughts, of His plans, it would be like our reading *War and Peace* to a two-year-old. Nothing would get through. We wouldn't learn a thing. Instead, He accommodates Himself to our capacity. He speaks to us true words, in helpful images, in the Bible. He tells us of His workings throughout history. He shows us what He is like through God incarnate, Jesus Christ. And so we get an incomplete, but a true picture of who He is, and what our relationship to Him can be.

God is beyond us. We can never comprehend him on our own. If left to our own reason, we will never figure out who He is – just as a two-year-old who never grew up could never understand his parents. But God has chosen to reveal who He is to us – through His Word.

(Several years ago I preached two sermons on Psalm 131: [first](#), [second](#). Part of this post is based on the first of those sermons).