

## 5. The Unreliable God Versus the God Who Is Trustworthy

### [Psalm 145:1-16](#)

Many children conclude from observing the adults in their lives that people are unreliable. Adults sometimes make promises they do not keep. They sometimes get angry when there seems to be nothing to be angry about. They may be loving, attentive and kind at times and hostile, inattentive and unkind at other times. And these changes may take place without explanation and without an opportunity for clarification.

We all need love that's reliable and predictable in order to develop trust. When people whom we depend on are unreliable, we might feel confused and disappointed and, as a result, decide that we cannot count on others. We start to believe we can only count on ourselves.

When we have been repeatedly disappointed by parents or other significant people in our lives, we may, without even realizing it, come to see God as unreliable too—someone who cannot be trusted, who might be loving one day and unaccountably angry or distant the next. We may fear that we cannot really trust God's promises of grace and love and help.

The good news is that the image of an unreliable God stands in stark contrast to biblical images of God. The God of the Bible is the Faithful One, the Rock, the Fortress, the one who is "the same yesterday and today and forever," as the author of Hebrews put it ([Hebrews 13:8](#)). The God of Scripture is a God of unflinching faithfulness and love.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Think of a person whom you see as reliable or trustworthy. Describe the person and your relationship to him or her.

PERSONAL REFLECTION. Describe one or two experiences in your life that could have led you to conclude that people were either reliable or unreliable. What feelings do you have as you recall these events?

[Psalm 145](#) is a psalm of praise to the God "whose kingdom is everlasting, whose dominion endures through all generations" and who "is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made" ([v. 13](#)).

Read [Psalm 145:1-16](#).

1. \*What does the psalmist say that one generation will tell to the next ([vv. 3-7](#))?
2. What does this pattern of one generation telling these truths about God to the next say about God's constancy, faithfulness and trustworthiness?
3. \*What does the psalmist say that he will do in response to God ([vv. 1-7](#))?

1. What effect do you think these activities might have on him?

4. \*How else does the psalmist describe the Lord and his kingdom ([vv. 8-13](#))?
5. \*In [verses 13-16](#) the psalmist paints an even more tender picture of God. Paraphrase what he says here.
6. What image of God comes through to you most clearly from this psalm?
7. How do the images of God in this text challenge the image of an unreliable god?
8. How would your life change if you were to more fully trust and believe that God is gracious, compassionate, rich in love and good to all, faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made?
9. What are some of the specific ways and times that you have seen God's trustworthiness in your life?
10. \*In order to correct distorted images of God, we need to allow ourselves to be engaged by the biblical text. Read the following phrases from [verses 13-16](#): "The LORD is faithful to all his promises and loving toward all he has made. The LORD upholds all those who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing." Sit with these images for a few minutes. Then reread the phrases and sit with the images again for a few minutes.
  1. Describe your thoughts and feelings during this meditation.

*Spend some time talking to God-who-is-trustworthy, asking for a greater capacity to trust in God's unfailing love.*

Now or Later

Ask God to heal you so that you can learn to rely on God's unfailing love more fully every day. Express thanks to God each day for the ways you see God's faithfulness and trustworthiness in your life.