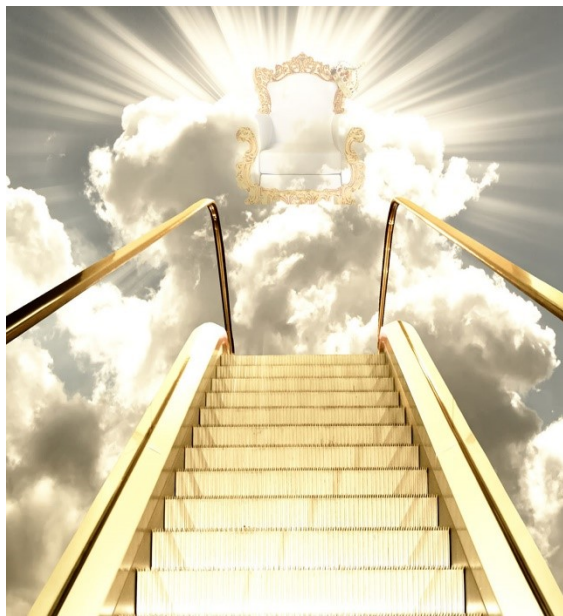


## Viewing God Through the Eyes of a Child

Did you ever play the game of identifying shapes in the clouds? I remember laying on my back in the grass and watching the clouds floating by with one or two friends looking for identifiable shapes and seeing if they could also spot the same shape. It was a fast-moving game literally as shapes moved and shifted. It was really fun on a lazy summer afternoon which I also enjoyed doing on my own. I enjoyed looking up at the clouds swiftly moving along trying to see a shape and also in hopes I might see an angel! I believed heaven was up in the clouds when I was little and believed that if I looked long enough, I'd might see an angel with beautiful wings. Now, I'll admit that I didn't have any expectation of seeing God because God was always hidden from our view in all of the stories I heard. So, he had to be somewhat higher in the clouds, way beyond our view, at that time as a five or six-year-old I had no concept of the 'atmosphere'. But I had formed a picture in my mind of what God must look like; and he was a really old man, with long wavy white hair, a long white beard, white flowing robes, sitting on a golden throne with a red cushion, holding a long gold staff with a golden orb on top and white billowing clouds under and around the back of the throne.



Where did my mental picture come from, possibly Bible stories and pictures of Jesus, or Noah, I also remember seeing Santa Clause at Eaton's in Toronto for the first time when I was five and in 1953 the full colour insert in the paper of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. Wow if the Queen had all those beautiful robes and crown what must God have! I expect I took bits and pieces of what I was familiar with to form a mental picture of God in my child's mind.

I don't know when I became aware that I no longer believed that Heaven was someplace in the clouds, or when I decided, I couldn't even begin to fathom what God might look like.

**1 Corinthians 13:11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.

The letter that Paul writes to the Corinthians revolves around problems in the church at that time, immaturity, instability, immorality and misuse of spiritual gifts. It is also a letter about progression, continuing development of a 'holy character' within the church.

**1 Corinthians 13:9, 10** For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part, but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

Our human mind can only understand things in terms of basic human understanding. We get things wrong; we misunderstand, sometimes we just choose not to listen, I believe Paul is telling us when Jesus comes again, that we will understand in a new fuller or enlightened way.

**1 Corinthians 13:12,13** For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, and the greatest of these is love.

Paul's writing to the church in Corinth is as relevant now as it was at the time of his writing.

This letter was intended to instruct the church and to inspire it. As individuals we are all influenced by our cultural environment. The problems and the questions we have in our time are maybe more complex, or bigger, more difficult to solve, then again maybe not. Maybe they still have a lot to do with cultural influences.

Being faithful requires we use our gifts wisely; it means we have hope and we have love for one another. It is the love in our hearts for God's creation and for all of God's people that will bring us unity.

I may not be able to conceptualize what God looks like, or if God is male or female but what I do know is that God is love!

Charlotte Ewbank