

## **Relating to God as Father**

“What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for His Father.” – J.I. Packer

### **What are your thoughts about God as your Heavenly Father?**

People often form their opinion of God the Father based on their experiences with their own earthly fathers. If a person is fortunate enough to have a good Christian father, those experiences bear some resemblance to God as Father. There are many, though, who had very bad models of fatherhood. Their perception of God as Father may be quite different. However, all comparisons fall short of God, our Heavenly Father.

### **Backward Thinking**

When we apply our father's attributes to God, we get it backwards. God created our fathers. God came first. Everything that a father should be God is.

Every limitation our fathers had, every mistake they made is because they were born into sin, just like the rest of us. The standard of measurement as a father is God whose love and ways are perfect.

Our error in thinking about the family of God, and God as our Father, comes from our perspective. When we view God as Father through the filter of family as we know it, there will always be faulty thinking.

If we are reluctant to take responsibility for disciplining our children, we may judge His commandments as harsh and resent His discipline in our own lives.

If we were never able to have a good conversation with our own fathers, we may have difficulty praying and approaching God intimately as “Abba, Father.”

If our father was selfish and did not work to provide adequately for his family, we may be hesitant to believe that our Father can and will provide for our needs.

If we had an absentee father, we may have difficulty knowing that God the Father will give us protection and guidance and be there when we need Him.

If we had a father who did not keep his promises, we may have problems believing God means what He says.

If we had a father whose comments tore us down instead of building us up, we may not see God as trustworthy and loving.

If we had a godly Christian father, we may still limit God in our thinking because our father had limitations simply because He was human. God is able to do far more than our earthly fathers were capable of doing.

### **God the Father loves us so much that He paid the price for adoption**

Adoption is never accidental. It is an expensive and enormously time-consuming process. Parents who adopt a child reveal - through their sacrifices - that they really want that child. Most parents adopt because they cannot have children any other way. God has a Son, but He and His Son desired to add to their family. The cost of our adoption was the sacrificial death of God's Son on the cross. God is Creator of all, but only Father to those who believe in His Son.

"Adoption is a *family* idea, conceived in terms of *love*, and viewing God as *father*. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is greater" (*Knowing God*, J.I. Packer).

### **God the Father shares His heart and searches for those who share their hearts with Him**

*The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14). *For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His* (2 Chronicles 16:9 NAS).

God's children can grieve and pierce His heart by disobeying Him and doubting Him. They can, however, please Him greatly with their trust and faith in Him.

A small child may be tempted to touch a hot stove. If he trusts his father, he will save himself a lot of misery by obeying his father when he is told not to touch the stove. He doesn't have to understand what a burn feels like to trust his father. His father knows, though, and wants to save him from pain.

A child of God never understands everything God tells him to do. If he trusts and obeys Him, he will not only please His father, but protect himself. God reserves a secret place for those who trust Him. You can trust the heart of your Father.

*He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, "He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust"* (Psalm 91:1-2).

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