

God as our Heavenly 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 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 is quite different from someone who had a Christian father. However, all comparisons fall short of who our Heavenly Father really is.

Backward Thinking

When we apply our father's attributes to God, we get it backwards. God came first. He created our earthly fathers. They needed salvation, just as we do. God Himself is the model Father. 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, we will always have faulty thinking. For instance:

- If we are reluctant to take responsibility for disciplining our children, we may judge His commandments as harsh and resent His discipline.
- If we were never able to have a good conversation with our own fathers, we may have trouble approaching God 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 He 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. Still, God instituted the family. He gave us fathers as examples. He instilled in them the desire to provide for, protect and guide their children. We just need to make sure that in our thinking about God as Father that we do not limit Him in any way.

How does God become our Heavenly Father?

To be part of God's family is to have come to a point in your life where you have believed in His Son with all your heart. To have God as Father is an act of the grace of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Read and discuss the following scriptures and notice the involvement of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the promises given to a believer.

How does one become a child of God?

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9-10).

What happens to a Christian when he dies?

. . . unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. . . For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:3, 5-6, 16).

What does God promise to give to His children?

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. . . For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:4-6,18).

God is all about family. Jesus demonstrated how we, as adopted children, can relate to God as Father. We can have the same relationship to the Father that Jesus has because He lives in us.

Adoptions are expensive and enormously time consuming. Those going through the adoption process reveal that they really want a child. Most parents adopt because they cannot have children any other way. God had a Son, but He and His Son desired to add to their family.

God does not need us, but He does want us. The adoption process that God went through proves His love for us.

An Inheritance is Not Earned

An inheritance is not earned. It is something that is bestowed upon a loved one. Sometimes a parent will make a distinction in their inheritance between a natural child and an adopted child. God, our Father, makes no distinction. In what might be called His Will and Testament, Jesus asked the Father to include His adopted children in His inheritance (John 17). See Hebrews 8:13, 9:15-17. Finally, the covenant was complete (Hebrew 13:20-21). What we could not do to fulfill our part of a covenant with God, Jesus did for us.

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29).

Grace Changes Everything

Believers in Christ no longer live under the judgment of law although the law still provides practical guidelines for living. Adopted children of God live under love, not law. God's goal for His children is to make them holy (Matthew 5:48). He wants us to become like Him. He sent Jesus not only to die for our sins and obtain a place in His family, but also to set an example. God knows our hearts and examines our hearts for His standard of holiness.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:21).

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called the children of God, and such we are. . . And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:1, 3 NAS).

Reflect on the gift of God's love as Father and the sacrifice of His Son Jesus in order to bring us into His family.

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Scripture references are from the New King James Version