

Week 6

God the Father

Key Verse

2 Corinthians 6:18 "And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

+ Introduction

You have heard it said there are no two fingerprints alike or there are no two snowflakes alike. So, it is with fathers. There are no two fathers who are alike. They have different personalities, different strengths, and different weaknesses. You can line up 12 fathers side by side, and they each would have different motivations, goals, and fears.

The challenge of thinking of God as Father is that we each have a different interpretation and reference point of what is a "good" father. For some, when they think of God as Father, they think of an older man with a long flowing beard, impossible not to be drawn to somehow. Others may think of God as an older man sitting on a throne looking like a king overseeing the kingdom. Perhaps some think of God as an interactive and participatory father in all aspects of life.

J.I. Packer writes in his book *Knowing God* –

"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God the Father."

God as Father is a role that is important to understand if for no other reason than Jesus referred to Him as "Father" almost every time He spoke of God, whether in prayers or teaching.

+ The Role of Father

Our church website (second.org) has this summation of what we believe about God the Father.

“There is one God. He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He eternally exists in three personalities: The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and one. He is perfect in His many attributes of holiness, love, power, knowledge, justice, and mercy.”

From the beginning of creation, God set forth the role of Father. In Genesis 1-2, we see the creation story in which God creates man in His image.

GENESIS 1:26-27 *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.”²⁷ So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female.*

God, as Father, had the role of creation and delegation. He created man in “our image” meaning the fullness of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But God the Father had that leadership role of the timing of this part of creation.

On day six, He created humans, both male and female. And He delegated responsibility. As any “good” father does, He wanted His children to have responsibility and authority over their environment.

Later in the book of Genesis, God established Abraham as a father of what would be “many nations.” Abraham gave birth to Isaac, Isaac gave birth to Jacob, and thus the Nation of Israel. From that moment, God became known as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was His role as Father that started the process and built forth a nation and a people.

The majesty of God as Father is impressive, to say the least but let us not forget that He is a Father who is interactive and participatory in our lives.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:18 *“And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”*

God is a Father who loves His children, listens to His children and runs to His children.

1. A Father who Loves

JOHN 3:16 *For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.*

In one of the most famous passages in the Bible, we see the love of God as a Father in a two-fold fashion. God is clearly the Father to the Son, Jesus. But God is also acting in the role of Father to the world in a loving way.

The Greek word for love, is the word, *Agapeo* (from *agape*). This is a sacrificial kind of love, as that of a “good father.” It is not based on emotion or reciprocity, instead, it is based on an adamant commitment to love unconditionally. *Agape* requires faithfulness, commitment, and sacrifice

without expecting anything in return.¹ This is the kind of love God, the Father shows to the world. It is important to understand that God's love as Father has no limits or boundaries. No one is hidden from His love.

God so loved the world. The depths of His love for the world was shown by the way He gave us His Son. God's love is a giving kind of love. He does not hold back from His children.

EPHESIANS 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

God, as Father, does not bless us with partial spiritual blessings. God, as Father, does not withhold anything from His children. In fact, God, the Father, gave His only Son for each one of us because of His sacrificial love. And we are reminded that every spiritual blessing comes from the Father.

James would put it this way in his epistle.

James 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.

There is a consistency of our Father's love. It is not a game of hide and seek. Nor is it only given to the highest bidder or most deserving. God's love for His children is an unwavering gift. It is up to each of us to receive that gift of love. In receiving that gift of His love through His Son, Jesus Christ, we enter into a personal and intimate relationship. And although God, our Father, is in heaven, He listens to us in the quietness of our hearts.

2. A Father who Listens

In Luke 11, Jesus is talking to His disciples, and they ask a very simple question about how to pray. Jesus responds with these words.

LUKE 11:2-4 *And He said to them, "When you pray, say:*

'Father, hallowed be Your name.

Your kingdom come.

³ *Give us each day our daily bread.*

⁴ *And forgive us our sins,*

For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And do not lead us into temptation."

The first word of the prayer is "Father." Jesus realized that God, as Father, is one who listens.

We live in a world that is loud, busy, chaotic, and ever-changing. However, our Father, who is in heaven, is available to us 24/7. All we have to do is talk to Him. He will listen to us every single time.

The noise of this world can be at triple-digit decibels, and God will listen to our whispers. Jesus is teaching His disciples about prayer, and there are many lessons and sermons on these verses about the way to pray. But do not miss the fact that it all begins with a relationship with God as Father.

The psalmists put it like this,

PSALM 40:1 *I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He reached down to me and heard my cry.*

PSALM 34:15 *The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, And His ears are toward their cry for help.*

Jeremiah put it like this,

JEREMIAH 29:12-14A *Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart. ¹⁴ I will let Myself be found by you,' declares the LORD,*

Back in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus continues teaching the disciples about His Father; a few verses after the model prayer, He gives an example.

LUKE 11:11-13 *Now which one of you fathers will his son ask for a fish, and instead of a fish, he will give him a snake? ¹² Or he will even ask for an egg, and his father will give him a scorpion? ¹³ So if you, despite being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"*

This relationship with God is that of a Father and child. When we talk to Him, He listens and responds. Sometimes He responds quickly with a clear answer. Other times, He waits for a better time, hence the psalmist is talking about being patient. But all the time, as our Father He listens to us and then responds in the way that is best for our benefit as His children.

In his book, *Moments with the Savior*, Ken Gire writes,

"We don't have to beat down the door to get God's attention. All we have to do is whisper. He is that near to us. And we are that dear to Him. That is why, when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them the ABC's of prayer, he started off the first lesson with the words... "Our Father." ²

3. A Father who Runs

Throughout the centuries, the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) has been an inspiration for the entertainment industry. Fathers and sons with estranged relationships. It is a narrative that people can relate to directly and indirectly. However, when Jesus told this parable, it was not as much about the son who had run away as it was about the father who ran towards the son.

LUKE 15:20 *So he set out and came to his father. But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*

Tim Keller, in his wonderful book, *The Prodigal God*, writes about this section of Scripture,

"The younger son comes within sight of the house. His father sees him and runs – runs to him! As a general rule, distinguished Middle Eastern patriarchs did not run. Children might run; women might run; young men might run. But, not the paterfamilias, the dignified pillar of

the community, the owner of the great estate. He would not pick up his robes and bare his legs like some boy. But this father does. He runs to his son and, showing his emotions openly, falls upon him and kisses him.”³

The father in the parable did not do what was customary, ordinary, or convenient. The father was compelled by his love for his son, an unconditional, unwavering, sacrificial kind of love. Not unlike the kind of love our Heavenly Father has for us.

This father was moved by compassion for his son who had run away. The Greek word for compassion is, “*Splagchnizomai*” which means, “to be moved as to one's bowels, hence to be moved with compassion, have compassion (for the bowels were thought to be the seat of love and pity).”⁴ So quite literally, the father felt this sense of compassion and love in the depths of his soul.

Imagine how much more our Father in heaven loves us. How many times has God, the Father, come running to you when you have strayed? How many times has God, the Father, run to you with His arms open wide, ready to embrace you without question?

The relationship had been established already between the father and son. This relationship did not cease with the running away of the son. The father never stopped caring for and loving his son. In fact, it is inferred that the father had been looking for him every day. In verse 20, when it says, “*But when he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.*” The father did not have to be told that his son was returning; he instinctively and practically knew because he never stopped looking for his boy to walk across the field.

Our Father's love is steadfast, never failing, unwavering, and always protecting.

PSALM 36:7 *How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. (ESV)*

+ Conclusion

In the song “How Deep is the Father’s Love for Us” written by Stuart Townend, the only verse says,

How deep the Father’s love for us,
How vast beyond all measure,
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure.

God, as our Father, loves us so much it is beyond comprehension. He sent His only Son that we would be His treasure. In all our filthiness, He sees a treasure. Not just a diamond in the rough, but a treasure fitting for a King who happens to be our Father.

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¹ <https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-does-agape-love-really-mean-in-the-bible.html>

² Ken Gire, *Moments with the Savior*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI; 1998, p. 214.

³ Tim Keller, *The Prodigal God*, Penguin Random House, 2010, p. 25, 26.

⁴ biblestudytools.com/lexicon