

God as Dad

"For the Spirit which you have now received is not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption [the Spirit producing sonship] in which we cry out, Abba! Father!"

- **Romans 8:15** (AMP)

The word "Abba" is a transliteration. The word "Father," is a translation. There is no English word that adequately conveys the meaning of the Aramaic word, "Abba." This is why the translators have given us this transliteration - "Abba." The word conveys a close **intimacy** that is reserved for parents and children. We might compare the word to Dad, but this doesn't really do it justice. The first use of the term "Abba, Father" appears in **Mark 14:36**, when Jesus said, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* This was a heart-cry from a Son to a Father!

Galatians 4:6-7 states, *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father'! Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."*

In just the same way as He sent His Son, God sent His Spirit. We do not doubt that the Son came; we should not doubt that the Spirit is here! We love the Son because He **"became flesh, and dwelt among us."** Likewise, the Spirit dwells in our flesh and has been doing so for thousands of years.

God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, **"Abba, Father."** Just as the Son prayed intimately to the Father in the garden, the Spirit of the Son comes into our hearts and prays in the same intimate way with the Father. Therefore, this is how we should address God in prayer — "Abba, Father."

Notice, the Son cried, "Abba, Father" in the garden. Now the Spirit, witnessing the adoption in us cries, "Abba, Father." Led by the Spirit of God, and out from under the bondage of the flesh, you too should cry, "Abba, Father." You are an heir of God. Therefore, boldly pray to the Father; relate to Him in an intimate way, as only a son and father could do; and live in the confidence of "sonship," not the fear of servanthood. Even though the word is weak in it's interpretation of "Abba", let your Heavenly Daddy be the one you cry out to when in need!

A word of caution... When addressing our Heavenly Father as "Dad" we must be careful not to be irreverent. The word "Abba" is meant to convey intimacy, and therefore, we can never disrespectful. I believe that God does desire for us to be intimate with Him, but at the same time maintain a sense of awe and wonder. After all, He is an Awesome God that demands respect and honour - the Almighty!

But since we are "children of God," would it not be appropriate to address God, our Father - when we talk to him as child to father, and speak to Him in a childlike way - as Daddy? I'm sure this is acceptable, and especially today because it's Fathers Day. That being so.....

If God is our "Daddy", what type of Dad is He?

1. He is a **willing Dad** - *Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed (Matthew 8:3).* Jesus always showed a willingness to bless those in need.

But God the Father is also willing! God willingly gave His only Son to die for us. Now, I have one daughter, and I love her very much, but if someone said it is either the life of your daughter or the life of all these other people, then I'd have to say, "no way." I could not do that!

But God was **willing** to let His only Son go through the pain and the torture and eventually die for you and me. Can you imagine how hard it would have been for God to hear His Son pray, "*Abba, Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me.*" I could not have stood back and heard that cry from Xana. I would have said, "Forget about them, just come home to daddy darling."

2. He is a tender Dad - "*Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide us to the path of peace*" (**Luke 1:78-79**). Like I've said before, the Lord's desire is for all to have an intimate relationship with Him. We read about His sadness over His rejection in Jerusalem. **Matthew 23:37**, "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.*" It breaks His heart every time we sin! Jesus longs to be with us, and yet, a lot of the time we are like Jerusalem - "not willing" - and it breaks His heart. We should be crying out, as the psalmist did, "*Do not withhold Your tender mercies from me, O Lord; let Your lovingkindness and Your truth continually preserve me*" (**Psalms 40:11**). God's heart is so tender toward you - more than you imagine!

3. He is an yearning Dad - "*Look down from heaven, And see from Your habitation, holy and glorious. Where are Your zeal and Your strength, The yearning of Your heart and Your mercies toward me?*" (**Isaiah 63:15**). In **Luke 15**, Jesus tells us of the parable of the Lost Son. A man had two sons and the younger son says, give me my inheritance now. So the father did this and the son then went and blew it all on sinful living. When the son returns, even though he is still far off, the father runs to him, and embraces him.

Then the father welcomes and restores him back into the family. When you go astray, God yearns for you to come back. If you will just take that one step toward God today, He will run to you with wide-open arms and welcome you back into that intimate relationship with Him. Like the prodigal son, it makes no difference where you've come from, or what kind of mess you've made of your life. He receives you just as you are! So turn, and come back to someone who genuinely yearns for you.

4. He is a patient Dad - "*Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you?*" (**Romans 2:4**). As our Heavenly Father, God is so patient. He withholds judgement as He waits for us to repent. Good fathers understand the difference between immaturity and rebellion and allow their children to stumble into maturity. How long has God been patient with you - as you have tried to get things right in a certain areas?

A recent article Billy Graham commented about his relationship with his son, Franklin, "In a radio interview Franklin told about his rebel years of drinking, drugs, smoking, girls, and fast living. These were things he said his mother and I knew nothing about—or so he thought. And he said he never forgot a conversation I had with him in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. I assured him of our love, no matter what he did, where he

went, or how he ended up. He knew that he could always phone us, collect; from anywhere in the world, and that whenever he wanted to come home, the door would always be open. He also knew we would never stop praying for him. It was during a trip to the Middle East, while in Jerusalem, that he made his firm decision to follow Christ." As God is patient with us, so we should be patient with our own children!

5. He is a permanent Dad - **Romans 8:35-39**, *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: 'For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter'. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am fully persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The above passage, like no other, tells us that God loves us with a steadfast undying love. He is not going to jump ship on us. He can be depended upon through thick and thin. God is a permanent God! He is not here today and gone tomorrow! Good fathers will demonstrate to their children that they will walk through the good times and bad times with them. They will walk through the fire for them. They will even go to the cross for them. That's what God did for us.

6. He is a Dad who provides - *"So Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide. And it is said to this day, On the mount of the Lord it will be provided" (Genesis 22:14).* *"You visit the earth and saturate it with water; You greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; You provide them with grain when You have so prepared the earth" (Psalm 65:9).* *"Your flock found a dwelling place in it; You, O God, in Your goodness did provide for the poor and needy." (Psalm 68:10)* God is Jehovah Jirah - our Provider. He is the Shepherd of **Psalm 23**, that says, "we shall lack nothing." He is the God of **Philippians 4:10** who promises to supply "all our needs according to His riches in glory." He is the loving Father of Matthew 6 that feeds the birds and promises to feed us.

God provides for all our needs. In kindness and mercy, He even sends rain on the unjust as well. There are times when we as fathers need to respond to "wrong doing" in our children with 'kindness' and 'mercy'. Think back to when you needed just that!

7. He is a Dad who protects - *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." Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler. And from the perilous pestilence. He shall cover you with His feathers. And under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler. You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it shall not come near you. Only with your eyes shall you look, and see the reward of the wicked. Because you have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, your dwelling place, no evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone (Psalm 91:1-12).*

Father God is our refuge and our fortress! He is both a strong tower and a shield. He protects us in so many ways.

God gives His angels charge over us and rescues us from perilous and evil situations. God intervenes whenever it's necessary! He gets between us, in whatever the devil is up to, and delivers us through a way of escape (1 **Corinthians 10:13**). As good fathers, we should teach our children how to recognise the way of escape when they are faced with temptation. Give them personal examples.

Remember, God also protects us by correcting us. *"Behold, happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty"* (**Job 5:17**). Yes, correction is a way that God shows us His love and teaches us to avoid something far worse later on. This is why we become happy! Good fathers will correct their children out of love and use the correction as a teaching tool for their future benefit. No correction breeds a rebellious heart - an attitude that leads to destruction.

To recap. When we cry "Abba, Father" - we are crying to a God who:

1. Is willing
2. Is tender
3. Is yearning
4. Is patient
5. Is permanent
6. Is our provider
7. Is our protector

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" (**Romans 8:15**)

The law from "without," with its rules, regulations, and threatenings, could only produce fear, but the **Spirit** living within us produces a revolutionary change which causes us to look to God and call Him "Father" - with an intimacy that the law prohibited. Abba, Father!