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What Is A Father: Part One

A Father Is Giving

One of the truly great blessings of being a father is to learn what it means that God is our Father. I have only been a father shortly under four years now, but even still again and again I have found myself thinking "If I being a sinner know how to do this for my daughter how much more doesn't my Father in heaven know how to do this for me."

When my daughter will not go to sleep unless I hold her, it reminds me of times when I was distressed and troubled and could not find sleep until through His word and prayer the Lord calmed me. When my daughter commits the same mischief over and over, it reminds me of God's unbelievable patience in dealing with me and my sin. When she throws a fit because she cannot have what she wants it reminds me how God gives to me only what is good for me even when I maybe get angry or demand that he give me what I want. So as we grow as fathers we learn more and more to appreciate what God means when He tells us to call Him Father and calls us His children.

This is of course to some degree backwards. We should not define what it means that God is our Father by our sinful examples, rather we ought to learn what God means when He calls Himself our Father and then apply that to how to be good father's by His example. Nevertheless as long as we begin with a scriptural definition our own experiences can help us to understand and appreciate what God our Father has done for us.

For these reason I am starting a new series today, "What does it mean that God is our Father?"

It is my hope that as we study this topic we will all learn:

1. To better appreciate and rejoice in God's love for us
2. To learn how to pray better "as dear children asking their dear Father"
3. To learn how to be better fathers and mothers by His example

The third point is secondary. It is important but the first two are the main objectives.

Heavenly Father grant us thy grace so that learning to know you as our true Father we may grow in confidence and faith and learn to imitate by your power Your own example in our lives. Amen

James 1:13-20 ¹³ Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. ¹⁴ But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ¹⁵ Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. ¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved

brethren. ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures. ¹⁹ So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰ for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

What does it mean that God is our Father? It means He is giving.

James reminds us that every good gift comes down from above. This is one of the core truths of scripture.

When our Father created the world and gave to Adam the garden and every good fruit and even greatest of all made Eve as a companion for him, He shows that as our Father he provides and gives every good thing.

When God the Father gave to Aaron the blessing that he then was supposed to give to God's people, "The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace, " the Lord showed that He provides and gives every good thing.

When He gave the Israelites clothes and shoes and food in the wilderness, when he brought them to a new land filled with milk and honey, when he protected them from every evil, when he gave them a king (not because it was good but because they asked), in all these things and so many more our Father in heaven demonstrates that as our father He will give every good thing, especially when we ask.

Because God is our Father he will give us every good and every perfect gift.

James says "Every good gift and every perfect gift." The word for perfect there is "τέλειον" meaning that which is completed or perfected. That word implies time and perfect craftsmanship. The gifts of God are the perfect hand crafted carefully finished product of the master craftsman. The gifts of God are like a suit or a dress tailored made for you and no one else. The "gifts" of the devil are the mass produced cheap plastic junk that breaks down in a month and fills our garbage piles. I speak metaphorically here.

Yet because of our sin we want what we want and we want it now. Rather than wait for the good and perfect gifts of God we so often rush after the temptations of Satan.

In our sinfulness we cannot understand God's goodness and have trouble believing He is going to give us every good and useful thing.

Hence the parable of the friend at midnight. If you will not believe that God will answer merely out of His goodness, perhaps you will understand that if you bug him enough he will answer just to keep you

silent. Jesus does not mean to teach that God will get annoyed with our constant prayer but rather to encourage us to pray earnestly and continually.

In what ways do we fail to recognize that God is our Father?

We fail to believe that our Father is giving when because He does not give us what we want we assume He is not listening or we get angry at Him.

How many of you fathers out there have children who have screamed at you "I hate you", and have then gone and slammed the door to their room? All too often we forget that we are not really any better than our teenage children, that all too often we demand of God our own way. And when we don't get it we get angry.

No good and gracious father would ever give their child a saw if they did not first make sure they knew how to use it safely. No good father would ever give his child cocaine or put arsenic in their water.

Even so our Father in heaven does not give us what is bad for us but what is for our good, even when we sulk in our bedroom because we don't get our way.

We fail to believe that our Father is giving when we think that what he has given to someone else is better than what he has given to us

The grass is always greener. When we think that someone else's spouse / marriage is better than ours. When we think that someone else's job or position is better than what God has given to us. When we think that someone else house or car or . . . is better. In all these things we are accusing our Father of giving to them and withholding from us.

Historically rebellion does not happen when people are at their worst point, it happens when things are getting better. People are not discontent when they have little, they are discontent when they see that their neighbor has more. But such discontentment is an accusation against our Father that he has failed to provide and give.

Against all these things James says "do not be deceived, every good gift comes from above." Your father knows what you have need of and knows how to give it to you and how to take care of you.

We fail to recognize that God is our Giving Father when we attempt to bargain with Him.

This is the way that the heathen and the atheist pray. If you do this than I will do this . . . OR "Because I did this God you owe me . . ."

How many of you have seen the Disney Movie “The Hunchback of Notre Dame”? The Gypsy woman prays “I do not pray for myself.” And supposedly then God was more willing to listen.

One of the really sad things I saw in India was how the Hindus treat their gods the same way they treated me, flattery and bribery. Their gods weren’t fathers to them, they were powerful beings who might help them out if they felt like it.

God does not say to us if you offer me something worthy enough I will listen or if you pray. He does not say, “for something good enough I will listen.” Rather he says “ask and you will receive.”

In the weakness of our faith we have probably all at times approached God with these same attitudes. Yet God does not turn from us because of these failings. He still hears us for the sake of His Son.

Let us pray . . . Against such weakness of faith, we ask Lord that you would be with us in your strength to guard us and when we sin in thoughts of covetousness or unbelief forgive us for the sake of your Son, and teach us so that we might learn to approach you as your true children. Amen

How then ought we to approach God?

On what basis are we able to approach God as our Father? On what basis did Abraham approach God? Trick question. Abraham didn’t approach God. God chose Abraham. God approached Abraham. Then because God had come to him Abraham was able to speak to God.

So also for us there is no basis on which we are able to approach God. You see that is what is wrong with all those attitudes we just spoke about. We in our sinfulness are always thinking I must do something in order to get God to listen to me. I must do something in order to be able to approach God. Yet there is nothing I can do to approach Him

The bargaining and flattery don’t work but it also doesn’t matter because God is already listening.

God has come to us. He has come to us in our baptism. Without baptism no one would have the right to pray to God, with Baptism God has come to us as He came to Abraham and called us his children. Because God has come to us we can ask whatever we want.

Ask and you shall receive for the Lord is our Father and as Our Father he is good and gracious and giving.

Amen