

You Have the Best Father

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Joseph and Mary can't find Jesus in the thousands of people leaving Jerusalem after the huge Passover celebration. Jesus is only 12. Finally, they spot him.

Luke 2:49: "And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?"

- Have you ever been separated from your parents in a busy place?
- Have you ever lost your child in a busy place?
- **Why did Jesus have so much peace?** *He knew His Heavenly Father.*
- **REMEMBER:** Jesus lived his life as a human being—not as God. He had to come to faith in God and be filled with Holy Spirit **JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER HUMAN BEING.** Jesus can be **the model Christian** because he lived his life just like we do.
- **We live in scary times. Nations and even our nation is shaking and growing more divided by the month.** The Bible says just before Jesus comes back that times will get very scary for most people—but **not for God's people** who know their Heavenly Father like Jesus did.

Friends, the peace Jesus knew as a young boy is the peace all of us **need and can have.** Experiencing our **Heavenly Father's love** is a **birthright** for every born-again believer in Jesus Christ.

Do you want that peace? I am not a great preacher but if you listen well to what I am about to say, **it can change your life forever** and you can have the peace that Jesus had when he was lost from his parents.

Let me tell you a story. I, too, was separated from my both of parents—from the age of 8 due to the divorce of my parents. My grandparents raised me for 10 years and my parents **visited me once or twice a year** most of the time. My grandfather was a good man but

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a very harsh man. He was a retired Philadelphia cop who had lied about his age and **joined the Navy at age 14** so he could help support his family after his father died in a factory accident. Life had been hard for him. My grandmom was a good woman but addicted to alcohol due to her abusive childhood.

In our house, there were no hugs, no “I love you’s” but a lot of **physical discipline** with a police strap. My Pop—as I called my grandfather— was on his second marriage. His first wife divorced him and **married an African -American man named Charlie**. I liked Charlie. He was a good Baptist and a kind man but we did not see each other much.

One day I told one of the nuns of the Catholic school I attended that I missed the love of my father. **The nun told me that God was a father**. That shocked me. I didn’t really understand how God could be a **real father** but shortly after that God revealed himself to me as my heavenly father and **I fell in love with him as a father. His love for me felt more real and more satisfying than the love of any person**. I prayed to Jesus and worshipped him, but I gave my heart to the Father **because I needed a father. At eight years old, I felt abandoned, somewhat worthless and I feared people who could let me down. The Father’s love was my anchor in that emotional storm. It still is.**

I remember walking to school down the Archie Bunker row houses on Sears St. in South Philadelphia, talking to God, as I usually did every day. I said “God you love me so much it feels like you’ve adopted me.” **Adoption** was the only word I knew that expressed how loved I felt by the Father. 12 years later, I read for the first time in the Bible that **God adopts every child he has** when they are **born again** to a living faith in Jesus.

You’re probably familiar with **Romans 8:15-17**: “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!’**

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The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are **God's children**.
17 Now if we are children, then **we are heirs**—heirs of God and **co-heirs with Christ**, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

I was flabbergasted when I read that. I said something like “Holy cow! The Bible is saying what I experienced years ago. God did adopt me as his very own child!”

A little later, I stumbled upon these other verses. I had never heard them in any sermon or in any class at my Catholic schools.

Ephesians 1: 3-5:

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, 4 just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love 5 He **predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ** to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will...”

Again, I was dumbfounded. I think I cried when I read those verses. God decided to adopt me as his very own child before he made the world!

The truth hit like thunder: I wasn't a mistake. **I was never worthless. I was never abandoned.** If God knew me and loved me and chose me before the world was made, then **I have tremendous value. I can love myself. I can feel safe in the world even though I don't have my mother and father with me.”**

Did I ever feel depressed as a child after knowing all that? You bet I did. Did I ever miss my parents and **cry for them at night.** Yes, very often.

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But I knew the God the Father loved me and that I was His adopted son. His love kept me from **self-destructing into anger and rebellion like my brother did.**

I was 10 when we moved to South Jersey in a little, backwater community with few children. I remember very clearly standing on the road overlooking Delaware Bay and I said to myself, **“Life really is fragile and temporary. My family is broken and it may never come back together – – but I’m going to heaven.”** God gave me **that faith.** I knew I had a Father in heaven who would never leave me or forsake me— and one day he was going to bring me home to heaven – – to his home – – because He promised that in the Bible— and **the love I experienced from Him gave me the strength to trust what He said.**

Back to the Garden

Let me tell you another story. It begins in the garden of Eden. God loved Adam and Eve. They were his first children. God didn’t make them so that they would work hard tending the garden. Angels could do that easily. God made Adam and Eve **to enjoy them and so that they would enjoy Him.** God used to walk in the cool of the day in the garden and talk with Adam and Eve as a Father would with his children.

“Wow, Adam! Great job naming all those animals!”

“Thank you, Father. Lions and tigers were easy to name but that one little creature took a while to name.”

“Which one was that?”

“The duck-billed platypus!”

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You can almost hear angels and animals snickering as God shared a big laugh with his two beloved children.

But you know the rest of the story. Adam and Eve broke the one commandment God had given them **to not eat the fruit** from the tree of good and evil. So God was forced to expel them from the garden and He sadly lost his close relationship with them that He cherished so much.

So, here's what happened as a result of all that. You may disagree. That's OK. I could be wrong. But, let me add that I earned a Masters of Divinity from a good seminary. I've studied Greek and Hebrew. I've studied the Bible for over over 50 years.

I really believe that after the sin of Adam and Eve, the rest of the Bible is **the record of a grieving Father working to get his kids back** to that same close relationship He had with Adam and Eve in the garden.

That's why the most famous verse in the Bible says in **John 3: 16** that **God so loved the world** that he sent His only begotten son that whosoever should believe in him should not perish but have life everlasting. That is **God the Father** sending His own Son to die for us. The Old Testament did not bring humanity back to God so God's final plan was the New Covenant that Jesus started when He came to earth.

Please note: **God is not sin focused. He is relationship focused.** He longs to love us as a father and He longs to be loved as a father by us. But he had to clean us up from our sins so He could have the intimate Father-child relationship He longed for. **What Jesus did in His death and resurrection was just a means to an end.** The purpose of all that was so that we could enjoy a father-child relationship with the King of the universe who chose us to be his very own children before time began.

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Verses 11-12 in Chapter 1 of the Gospel of John make this very clear. He [Jesus] came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. ¹² But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name...

John 14:[^] “ I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No man come to the Father except through Me.”

Jesus is the Way, but the Father is the destination!

Perhaps you would say to me, “But Pastor Bob, I am a born-again Christian. I have experienced the Father’s love for me a long time ago but I don’t feel his love for me much anymore.”

There are two main reasons for **losing the experience of the father’s love.**

Pain

This is how I would respond to you: **God doesn’t change his mind about us.** He still loves you passionately. Perhaps you are going through a difficult time like Jesus did on the cross when he cried out “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?...My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46). In times of intense suffering, we can feel like **God is not near.** We can even believe the lies that **He does not care about our pain.**

But Jesus warned us that in this world **we would face tribulation.** He said people **would hate us** because we belong to him. Jesus said that **we would be persecuted** because they persecuted him. And

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much of these trials **come from our invisible enemies led by the Devil—the same Devil who opposed Jesus and His original followers.** But Jesus said that we could still have joy because He has overcome the world and by his grace we can overcome too.

Sin

A second reason you may not feel close to God the Father is because of **unrepentant sin in your life.** God is a real father and he will **discipline us** so that we can share in his holiness. When God is disciplining us, it often does not feel like we are close to Him. If we're involved an **unrepentant sexual sin like fornication or adultery or pornography or bitterness or unforgiveness or slander and gossip,** the Lord will lovingly discipline us as any good father would his children. You can read about that in Hebrews chapter 12.

All we have to do is sincerely repent. As first John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” **God longs to be gracious to us.** God is passionate to love us as a gracious, tenderhearted father —as in the following story.

Father of Prodigal Son

Remember the parable of the prodigal son. The son left home and was living in rebellion for a long time in another city. He was **getting drunk, sleeping with prostitutes and doing other foolish things.** Finally he comes back to his father, with **great humility and repentance.**

What did the father do? Did he scold him? Did he punish him?

No!

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But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

He put the best of his robes on him, new sandals and a ring only family can have. Then, the father shouted to his servants:

Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ **For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'**

That's a perfect description of how God the Father responds to **His humble, repentant children.**

Never Had Father's Love

You may never have experienced the love of God the Father for one of two reasons.

Not Like Your Dad

Most people seem to equate their earthly father with God the Father. That is a big mistake. A lie, really.

I have talked to many people in the last 40 years who are reluctant to get close to God the Father because they think that **He is like their earthly father who has hurt them in some way.**

Nothing could be farther from the truth. The best earthly father cannot compare with God the Father. Our Father in heaven is the most wonderful, tenderhearted, gracious, merciful, generous, wise and faithful father anyone could ever have. I and my wife have helped several people **connect with God the Father's affection for**

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them through a prayer ministry. Every born-again Christian should experience **the witness of the Holy Spirit** that Romans 8:15-17 reveals.

Every Christian **can call God Abba, Daddy, Pop** and experience His wonderful, fatherly affection for them.

Born Again

The second reason you may never have experienced the love of God as your Heavenly Father is that you are not fully converted, not a born-again Christian. Going to church and saying Christian words is not the same as being a new creation—someone whose spirit has been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Born-again Christians **are different from normal, unsaved people—and they know it and they act different.** The Spirit has convinced them that they are God's adopted children. **It is an experience, not just words we say.**

Parents

I am totally convinced from my own experience and the experience of people in my own family, that **if children were to grow up knowing in experiencing God's love for them as their father**, the chances of them ending up in rebellious lives, lives addicted to alcohol or drugs or lives in jail – – the chances of that happening would be almost nothing. **Even as adult children, they can meet their Heavenly Father. It changes everything.**

I'm also convinced after being married for 51 years that any marriage between a born-again Christian and their spouse will be happier and healthier and holier **if one or both of those spouses knows and experiences the love of God as their Father.**

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I'd like to sing a very short song for you about how I have felt about God the father all my life.

I am in love with you for you have called me child. (2x)

You reached down and tell me you heard my lonely cry.

I will praise your name for the and give you all my life.

Repeat.

Pray

Recommit to Jesus

Ask for the witness of the Spirit to call God Abba, Daddy

**Ask for another filling of the Spirit to know God more
and live for Him with all our hearts!**