Abba Father

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 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!” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,… Romans 8:14 - 16

Creation
Our Purpose in Life

Knowing our purpose in life is one of the truths most essential to us. Why? Because when we are doing what we were created to do we will accurately reflect the image of God, and we will experience the fulfillment and contentment God intended. Conversely, if we do not know our purpose, the image of God we bear will be blemished and we will never find contentment or fulfillment. In addition, decision-making will be very difficult because without a destination, choosing what direction to go is virtually impossible! God is looking for people to fulfill His purpose and enjoy contentment in Him.

What is Our Purpose?
To know God, to love God, and to enjoy Him forever.

The Westminster Confession answers, “What is the chief end of Man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”

And this is eternal life that they know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent. John 17:3

Thus says the Lord,’ Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not a mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich men boast of his riches, but let him who boasts, boast of this, that he understands and knows Me,... Jeremiah 9:23 – 24a

I don’t want your sacrifices- I want your love; I don’t want your offerings-- I want you to know Me. Hosea 6:6 (Living Bible)
What we are attempting to communicate goes beyond the mind. You can’t communicate this message with facts alone; it has to be heard in the heart.

...flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven. Matthew 16:17b

What makes life worthwhile is having a big enough objective, something which catches our imagination and lays hold of our allegiance; and this the Christian has, in a way that no other man has. For what higher, and more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God? (Knowing God, J.I. Packer)

One of the ways God has made Himself known to us is through His names.

Those that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee;... Psalm 9:10a

**Abba:** The most intimate name by which God reveals Himself.

One of the first words that often comes out of a Jewish baby’s mouth is “Abba”, the equivalent of “Daddy”. Jesus referred to the Father as Abba. This is the most intimate name by which God reveals Himself to us. This reveals the kind of relationship He desires to have with us. He longs for us to run to Him as we would to the perfect Father; One we could call on for help at any time and know we would receive it, One who would gladly take our burdens off our hearts and bear them in His own, One who longs to lead us in green pastures and fill us with His joy.

Do you know Him? Do you know Abba? How you answer that question relates to everything else in life and also determines your purpose in life.

**God’s Design**

Man was meant to worship, to seek God, to commune with God and to love Him, but most importantly, man was meant to enjoy a close personal relationship with His Father. The parent/child relationship is one most can identify with no matter their era or country.

*Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.*

Isaiah 49:15

(See also Isaiah 63:16 and Isaiah 64:8.)

Man was designed to experience a loving relationship with God as his Father. This was to be a natural transition as our earthly fathers demonstrated how a loving dad would care and provide for us. Then, as we matured in age, the transition over to our heavenly Father would be familiar and smooth. However, with the fall, this all changed.

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Separation
The Distorted Father Image

At the Fall, when Adam and Eve chose to sin, man lost the unique Father/child relationship he had previously enjoyed with God. The spirit died to the things of God and consequently, there was no longer the vehicle for worship and communication with God as Father. Just as a child has his parents’ genes and traits, so we became like our “father” Adam; without the ability to relate to God. We became as orphans.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned. Romans 5:12

“Adam aspired to be adult in his relationship to God -- independent of God, self-sufficient, strong, and adequate in and of himself. Sin is living in the mindset of the adult, fractured from Abba, believing to be grown up and able to find the meaning of life within ourselves, independently of him. Tragically, when man entered the illusion that he could act as an adult, walking alongside of God instead of dependent on Him, he became a lost child.”

Learning to Walk as Abba’s Child, Malcolm Smith

Ultimate Idolatry

For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

Romans 1:25

As a result of the fall, man became a tool of Satan and used his members as instruments of unrighteousness rather than as God’s instruments of righteousness. Nevertheless, the desire for worship continued to exist. All throughout the Scriptures and throughout history, man’s desire to worship is exhibited even while his spirit is dead.

Man is incurably religious; even the most primitive of peoples have religious practices. (Exodus 32:4; Deuteronomy 4:19; 9:16; I Kings 12:28)

Man still sought Deity (according to his creation), but because after the fall he was dominated by his flesh and not the spirit, he often settled for a false god rather than the true God. (John 4:20-24; Galatians 4:8 & 9; Isaiah 57: 10 – 13; Jeremiah 2: 27 & 28; I Corinthians 2: 14)

Satan led man to turn his worship inward toward self and outward towards creatures rather than toward the Creator (Romans 1:22 & 23). Satan knew that if he could distort man’s view of God by destroying the Father/child relationship, man would create gods after themselves.
Satan continues to war against us with the same strategy he used against our mother Eve. He persuaded Eve to disobey God by painting a false picture of Him, casting Him as a miserly father who held back the best for himself. Satan did this by casting doubt on God’s word, His character, and His motive (Genesis 3:1-5; 2:16 - 17). The trusting Father/child relationship was broken, the death of this relationship spread to all mankind, and man began to worship the creature rather than the Creator (Genesis 3: 9-11).

**Man becomes like the gods he creates**

Man reflects both in character and behavior, the image of the gods he creates in his mind. Whether you are a Christian or a non-Christian, a skewed concept of God produces spiritual and emotional problems.

*Those who make them will become like them. Everyone who trusts in them.*
*Psalm 115: 8*

*The idols of the nations are but silver and gold, the work of man’s hands.*
*Those who make them will be like them. Yes, everyone who trusts in them.*
*Psalm 135: 15 & 18*

**Man’s view of himself is inseparably linked to his view of God**

*Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*
*I John 3:2*

**Life Situations That Greatly Affect Our View Of God**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>divorce</th>
<th>death</th>
<th>alcoholism</th>
<th>abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lack of commitment</td>
<td>perfectionism</td>
<td>workaholism</td>
<td>boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life traumas</td>
<td>unhealthy homes</td>
<td>improper discipline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The real victim of any of the above is the child. Because of the fall, every child sees himself as the center of his universe and therefore, interprets life situations from this perspective. A child that suffers abuse doesn’t conclude, “I have terrible parents,” but rather, “I’m not worth my parents love; or there is something in me that deserves this; or I am the cause of this.”
**Transferring Fathers**

Throughout life each of us has developed, in our mind, a concept of “father” in light of our earthly fathers and other significant authority figures (mothers, coaches, teachers, spiritual leaders). Although these perceptions of our earthly father (and other authority figures) may be accurate of them, they are inaccurate in regard to our Heavenly Father, to whom we often transfer these perceptions. Because we apply our beliefs concerning our earthly fathers to our heavenly Father, we end up with a “father” who is much less than our true heavenly One. Even the best of fathers cannot accurately portray our heavenly Father simply because of limitations of time and space.

**Identifying Behaviors & Beliefs**

These are some general symptoms of an inaccurate Father image.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MALE</th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Aggressive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indecisive</td>
<td>Decisive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perfectionist, demanding, high expectations</td>
<td>Controlling, demanding, high expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stoic, non-expressive</td>
<td>Self-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor leader</td>
<td>Strong authority in home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak character in home</td>
<td>Doubts motherhood abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfied with status quo</td>
<td>Self-condemning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-righteous</td>
<td>Frustrated, hopeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-touch</td>
<td>Over involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidated</td>
<td>Intimidating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Buys’ or manipulates wife</td>
<td>Insecure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels inadequate</td>
<td>Doubts femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubts masculinity</td>
<td>Feels trapped, fearful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep fear of failure</td>
<td>Attracted to older men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecure/no confidence</td>
<td>Deep fear of rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tends to try to work on marriage in crisis only</td>
<td>Tends to create or avoid crisis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Which of the above traits, if any, do you recognize in your life?*
Reconciliation

Moving Towards Our Abba Father and Becoming Childlike

All that we’ve discussed so far; the incredible message of grace, the new life we have been given, the exchange of Christ’s Life for ours, are awesome truths and yet they are not an end in themselves but a vehicle to bring us to where we were intended to be. Our destiny is to enter into the home of Abba’s heart. Let’s not get so involved with the vehicle of the message (grace, identity, exchanged life, etc.) that we forget the message!

In order to no longer be orphans, we must somehow be reconciled to our Father God. This reconciliation is available through Christ and Christ alone. As Christians we know that we are now God’s children (I John 3: 1-3). God has adopted us and we are no longer sinful children of Adam, but saintly children of God. We have a new human spirit in which the Holy Spirit dwells and a permanent Father/child relationship with God the Father.

Let us pray that God would give us eyes to be dazzled and thunderstruck by the wonder of His love, and a return to innocent, openmouthed children. We pray that our eyes will be opened and our image of God will become a true one; that of a loving, compassionate, tender and generous Father (Romans 8:15 and 2 Corinthians 6:18).

A.W. Tozer describes one of his mentors’, (Faderick Faber) relationship to the Father in this way:

“His love for his Abba was so intense that it threatened to consume him. It burned within him as a sweet and holy madness and flowed from his lips like molten gold.” The Pursuit of God

Jesus as a Son

Even though Jesus was God and never ceased to be God, when He took on flesh He became a true man and lived as one of us without ever drawing upon His divine power. Jesus lived as man was originally intended; in childlike, fearless dependence on a trustworthy Father. And this is the mode of living which He proclaimed. In order for us to experience the full beauty of our Abba Father we must become childlike, rather than adult-like, in spirit.

Developing a Childlike Spirit

….Truly I say, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:3
A Contrast Between Childlike and Adult Thinking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Spirit</th>
<th>Adult Spirit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachable</td>
<td>Expert, professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always asking why</td>
<td>Don’t question me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always expecting to learn</td>
<td>Knows everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not ashamed to say “I don’t know”</td>
<td>Ashamed of not knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>so will pretend to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“This is the way it has always been”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preconceived idea-just sees what’s there</td>
<td>Trusts in own devices to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reckless confidence in Abba’s love</td>
<td>stay safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>so will live on the edge</td>
<td>A stranger to surprises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves surprises</td>
<td>Can’t see things as they are because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always open to change</td>
<td>has already decided they way it should be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in unconditional love of Father</td>
<td>Believes everything must be earned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In what ways do you express adult like thinking in your life?
**Imitating The Father**

The word imitate comes from the Greek word “mimic”. This does not restrict itself to simply doing the things that Jesus did as a son, but more living in the childlike dependence He demonstrated.

Behaviors shared by parents and their children do not always come automatically, but rather develop gradually over the years as children spend time with their parents and grow to model them.

\[\text{You become imitators of us and of the Lord.} \quad 1 \text{ Thessalonians 1:6}\]

\[\text{For you have been called for this purpose,...leaving you an example to follow in His steps.} \quad 1 \text{ Peter 2:21}\]

**Modeling The Father**

\[\text{For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example...} \quad 2 \text{ Thessalonians 3:7}\]

\[\text{That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.} \quad \text{John 17:21}\]

Modeling is the subtle shaping of an individual, which comes as a result of:

- The degree of similarity between the person and the model.
  (See Philippians 2--God became a man.)

- The competence of the model.

\[\text{For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have One who has been tempted in every way, just as we-- yet without sin.} \quad \text{Hebrews 4:15}\]

(See also 1 Peter 2:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:21.)

- Time spent in the presence of the model. (This free choice is up to the child of God.)
**Embracing The Loving Discipline of a Father**

It is vital that we see the discipline of Abba as loving correction rather than punishment.

*My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord...For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,...*  
Hebrews 12:5-6

*And He will restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.*  
Malachi 4:6

**Jesus as The Father**

How can we change a belief system that has substituted an earthly father for the heavenly One? God is Spirit and it is difficult for us to identify with anything but flesh and blood. So when God chose to reveal himself to mankind and commanded that we know Him, what medium did He primarily use? A moral code; a written description? No. The answer to this dilemma lies in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Jesus came to reveal the Father. From the cradle to the grave, every moment His life was a revelation of the Father. All other revelations are partial and therefore not wholly true. Only in Christ do we see God as He is; for Christ is declared to be the “express image” of God the Father.”  
God of All Comfort, Hannah Whitall Smith

Jesus is not a substitute for the Father; He is the essence of the Father on earth.

*For in His physical body every attribute of the Godhead continuously and permanently dwells.*  
Colossians 2:9

*Philip said to Him, ‘Lord show us the Father, and it is enough for us.’*  
*Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father’....*  
John 14:8-9

Jesus stepped out of heaven and became man so that a Father’s love and care could be seen and experienced by us, His children. Therefore, study Jesus’ life and words and say to yourself, “He that sees Jesus sees the Father, and what Jesus was on earth the Father is in heaven.”  
*(John 5:19-27; 8:18, 29, 42, 56, 68; 14:1-13)*
**APPLICATION:**

Fathers: Accept your responsibility to be a father. Outside of your time spent with Jesus and your time with your wife, no priority is greater than your child.

Mothers: If possible give your children's father the opportunity to be active in their lives. Release control and risk his making mistakes in parenting. **Spend time** with your child.

Sons and Daughters: Quit blaming your parents and apply forgiveness where it’s needed. Accept the father image you received from you parents as distorted or incomplete and move forward from where you are toward a healthy Father image. There is only one Person who can heal the hurts: ABBA Himself.

The Fatherhood of God provides for mans needs unlike any other relationship. The whole of the Christian life could be compared to a long pilgrimage to the House of the Father.

*But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*

*Galatians 4:4-5*

It would be enough if God just cleansed your name, but He does more. He gives you His name. It would be enough if God just set you free, but He does more, He takes you home. You were intended to live in your Father’s house. Any place less than His is insufficient. Any place far from His is dangerous. Only the home built for your heart can protect your heart. And your Father wants you to dwell in Him. *The Great House of Gods, Max Lucado*