

God, Our Father

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The first thing that Jesus gave to His disciples as a model for their prayers is a portrait of God. John records, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). The ability to understand completely the concept of God is impossible, because we are finite beings who cannot fathom the infinite. Theologians and philosophers have tried to define God with huge definitions that really do nothing but leave us empty. Nevertheless, Jesus did not come to this earth with a definition, but He chose to represent God by using a figure drawn from the family relationship—God, our Father.

There is a sense in which God is the universal Father of all humanity, since He is the creator of all humanity (cf. Acts 17:28). Yet, Jesus emphasizes in His model prayer and in other New Testament passages a spiritual relationship with His people, beginning with the nation of Israel and continuing today through the church, the spiritual family of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Thus, as Christians, we are more than just His family by creation—we are His family by grace through faith (Gal. 3:26-27; 2 Cor. 6:17-18). What attributes of a father demonstrate that of the character of our heavenly Father?



There is no Father like our Heavenly Father.

First, a father shows relationship. Just as a father is related to his child, I am related to God, and He is related to me. Through the grace of God and His gospel, I can be “born again” (John 3:3-5) by faith into the family of God, which is a spiritual new birth. Therefore, I am related to God. With Him as my Father, I am able to come into close personal relations with Him just as my human father. When we look at a newborn baby, we cannot really tell whether he looks like anyone in particular. If we lined up all the babies in a nursery of a hospital, they would look alike to me—red-faced, some with more hair, some with less. Possibly mothers and grandmothers can see little things, but as the child grows a little older, then we really can see the resemblances—father’s eyes, mother’s chin, father’s toes, grandmother’s hands, and such like. If I am a child of God, our Father, then I should look like God. When I begin my spiritual life, I will naturally not resemble Him very much, but the more I grow spiritually, the more I will become like him. Because I am a child of God, I am to think as God thinks. I am to love my enemies (Matt. 5:44)

because God loves His enemies (Rom. 5:10). I am to do good things and pray for those who despise me so that I may be as my Father in heaven (Matt. 5:45). We will grow into this likeness just as a baby grows to become more and more mature and resemble his parents. Therefore, I am related to the infinite God of heaven as His spiritual child.

Second, a father is one who infinitely cares about his children. It is natural for a father to be concerned about the welfare of his children (cf. 1 Pet. 5:6-7). Our heavenly Father is a Father who cares. To show His care for us, He sent His Son into this world to die on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:21). God, our Father, loves us with a love we cannot fathom. If we are lost, the reason will not be a reflection on the love of God, but it will be because of our own rebellion and hardness of heart. Yet, when we leave him, keep in mind that we do not leave him without breaking His heart. Because He made us as free moral agents, we can either reject what God wants us to do or accept in glad surrender and know the joy that comes from serving him.

Third, a father is one who assumes responsibility to provide for the physical care, health, education and development of the child. Therefore, Paul addresses this fact to fathers in Ephesians 6:4. In like manner, when God adds me to His family (Acts 2:47), then He does not leave me to starve and shiver through neglect. He demonstrates responsibility by providing for all of my spiritual needs so that I may be ready to live with Him in eternity (Eph. 1:3; 1 John 2:25). When I confront problems in my personal life, I can talk to my heavenly Father about them, because He has provided us with the avenue of prayer so that our fellowship together can provide strength (Heb. 4:16). Through the provision of the Bible, He can feed and nourish my spiritual life. In this great wide world, He presents me with countless opportunities to exercise godliness. He has provided me with an example of Jesus Christ, my Savior, so that I can grow more and more like Him every day. Upon the shoulders of His children, He has given us the responsibility of communicating His great love to all men and bringing others to Him.

Fourth, a father disciplines. I cannot think about a “father” without thinking about discipline, because this word implies authority. As our Father, God has authority because He created us, because He sustains us every day and because we surrendered our will to Him. Therefore, because He is our spiritual Father, the Bible emphasizes that discipline comes from God (Heb. 12:6-11). If our earthly fathers disciplined us, and we gave them respect, then should we not do the same for our spiritual Father? Our earthly fathers might have made mistakes in discipline, but our heavenly Father does not make mistakes. The problem today, though, is that many fathers leave their children to make their own choices without discipline. Our children need guidance, and they expect such from those of us who are experienced. Therefore, God our Father guides us in the way we should go and disciplines us so we can be stronger. Rookies are not fit to go to the battlefield to fight. The military knows this, and provides a period of basic and advanced training to discipline soldiers to the conditions of the battlefield. In like manner, God is preparing us for eternity. His purpose is high and His desire is to make us the best men and women that He can with the material with which He has to work.

The big difference between an earthly father and our heavenly Father is in the six words, “Our Father, which art in heaven.” One day, our ties with our earthly parents will dissolve, but our heavenly Father is one who is eternal, for He “inhabiteth eternity” (Isa. 57:15). If we do not make Him our Father now as we

live in this life, he will never be our Father in eternity. This is what it means to become a Christian—it is to make God our Father. This is what He wants.

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