

FATHER HEART OF GOD



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FATHER HEART OF GOD

TABLE OF CONTENT

Introduction	2
Father heart of God	5
Servants or Sons?	9
The Orphan Heart	12
The Father, as revealed by Jesus	16
The Prodigal Son – a Study of the Father's Heart	17



FATHER HEART OF GOD

INTRODUCTION

At the very core of the Christian faith lies a truth that is both profound and deeply personal: God does not relate to us as a master to his slaves, but as a Father to his children. Yet for many believers, this truth remains more theological concept than lived reality.

Shaped by life's wounds, distorted views of authority, and the quiet whispers of the enemy, we can find ourselves relating to God from a place of fear, striving, and insecurity — bearing the heart of an orphan rather than the heart of a son or daughter.

This book explore what Scripture reveals about the Father heart of God — from the earliest promises of the Old Testament to their fulfilment in the person of Jesus Christ. We will examine what it truly means to receive the Spirit of adoption, contrasting the posture of a servant with the freedom and inheritance that belong to a child of God.

Through the teachings and parables of Jesus, and most vividly in the story of the Prodigal Son, we will encounter a Father who watches, who runs, who celebrates — and who longs for nothing more than to be in relationship with His children.



FATHER HEART OF GOD

FATHER HEART OF GOD

Whether you carry wounds from your earthly father, struggle with a sense of belonging, or simply find yourself serving God out of duty rather than love, this study is an invitation to come home — to exchange the orphan heart for the heart of a beloved son or daughter.

Let me start by sharing a little bit of my own journey, as I navigated my way from living like an orphan in the Father's house, to become fully and utterly convinced of His love for me, and finding my unique place in the Father's house.

In 1996, at the age of 26, I became a single mother to two beautiful toddlers, when my husband passed away. Suddenly I found myself raising two boys without their father and this event became the first step in my total unraveling.

I was raised without my father for most of my life. My parents divorced when I was very young and my father moved on, remarried and started a new family. To him divorce meant separating himself not just from my mother, but from everything that was connected to her, children included.

My mother also remarried, and unfortunately for us that union also did not have a fairytale ending. My stepfather was a broken, traumatized man, an alcoholic and an angry drunk. To him we were the excess baggage he got saddled with when he married my mother.

I thought I had a normal childhood, and that all families lived like ours. My father was an angry man, my stepfather was an angry man, my grandfathers were angry men, and my uncles were angry too. Family celebrations would start with alcohol flowing and usually end with a screaming match. More than once I walked into the kitchen to find an uncle slapping an aunt. To my knowledge, this was what husbands and fathers did.

I married young. Like so many women before me, and too many to count after me, I believed the right man, if I found him, would heal all my wounds, and protect me from the abuse I suffered.

I married a broken man. He was the elder of three children, the first born son of a Lebanese family and his father was, you guessed it, an angry man. His father rules the whole family with an iron fist. Temper tantrums, throwing things and humiliating his wife, children and eventually me, was a common occurrence.

I am sure by now a clear picture is forming of the men that shaped my view of God the Father. As if that wasn't enough, I was raised in a Reformed church denomination, although using the word "raised" might be stretching it. Church was the place we got dropped off on a Sunday so that my mother could have uninterrupted time with her married lover. Here I was introduced to God, the judge. He was an angry, vengeful God. His standards were higher than I could reach. This version of God was very well-represented by the men in my world.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

Now I would like to take you on the journey I was led on; a journey that started when I fell in love with Jesus and a journey that I am still walking out. It may seem a bit academic, but bear with me, as we explore the Word, listen to Jesus as He teaches us about the Father and trust Him to do what He promised to do – show us the Father.



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The Spirit of Adoption and Sonship

Sonship in the Old Testament

God has always intended to have sons, not slaves. Let's look at a few key scriptures:

- Hosea 11:1: "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.

Cross references:

- 2 Samuel 7:14: I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands.
- Deuteronomy 14: 1, 2: "You are the sons of the LORD your God. You shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
- Isaiah 63:16: For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.

Right from the start, the Lord God introduces Himself to mankind, not as Judge, Ruler, King or Creator, but as Father. His intention has always been to increase His family, and to have many sons and daughters.

As a side note, as a woman it is possible to read these scriptures and feel left out. These have also used to allude to the fact that women are less loved and valued by the Lord, which is a total perversion of His heart for us. Sonship is positional, not gender specific. Male and female are sons, and bride.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

Sonship and Adoption in the New Testament

In the New Testament, we are introduced to Jesus, the firstborn of many sons. Romans 8:29 states: *“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers”* (ESV)

At the fall, when relationship was broken between humanity and God, who created us all, He already had a plan of redemption. Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, came willingly, and sacrificially, to restore the lost sons and daughters back to the Father. His role here was to reintroduce us to our Father and pay our debts so that we could be reunited. God's intention has always been to extend His family.

Let's look at some key verses:

- Galatians 4:5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.
- Romans 8:15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, *“Abba, Father.”*
- Romans 8:23 Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.
- Ephesians 1:4, 5 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 2:2; Ezekiel 16:22

A beautiful illustration of this played out in my family, and the Lord used it to speak to some deep wounds in my heart and bring understanding to my mind. My husband, when he married me, did so knowing full well that I would not be able to have any more children. He made a conscious choice to adopt my sons, giving up the opportunity to have biological children of his own. As I am writing this, we have been married for 26 years, and never once has the term “stepfather” been used in our home. This is such a beautiful illustration of God's heart. He could create more sons like Jesus, but He chose us to be sons. God is never, ever a stepfather.

In Jewish culture, adoption meant having a legal place in the family, receiving a full inheritance, carrying the family name and it was impossible to be disowned. So it is with us!

FATHER HEART OF GOD

The Father's Heart expressed in the Old Testament

Through the writings of the prophets God expresses His heart for us.

Have a look at some scriptures that speak to this:

- Isaiah 63:16 *But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, Lord, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*
- Isaiah 64:8 *Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.*
- Jeremiah 3: 19 *"I myself said, "How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me.*
- Jeremiah 31:9, 20

9 They will come with weeping; they will pray as I bring them back. I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble, because I am Israel's father, and Ephraim is my firstborn son.

20 Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him," declares the Lord.

God also reveals His heart through the Wisdom literature.

Psalm 103:13: As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.

Here are some scriptures to explore for yourself:

- Psalm 2:7; Psalm 27:10; Psalm 68:5
- Proverbs 1:8; Proverbs 3:12; Proverbs 4:1 -27; Proverbs 6:20; Proverbs 13:1; Proverbs 15:5, 20; Proverbs 17:21, 25; Proverbs 19:13, 26; Proverbs 20:20; Proverbs 23:22 – 24; Proverbs 28:7, 24; Proverbs 29:3; Proverbs 30:17

FATHER HEART OF GOD

The Father's Heart expressed in the New Testament

The Love for the Son

All through the New Testament we read about the Father's love for Jesus. The Father loves Jesus, and He is well please with him, as we read in Luke 3:22 which states *"and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

The Father publicly affirms Jesus, not only as His son, but as one loved and accepted. Everything about Jesus pleased the Father. The Father trusted Jesus to be faithful and true. John 3:35 is evidence of this, when we read *"The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."*

Another scripture that allude to this is John 5:20, which reads: *"For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed".* One can only be this transparent and trusting of someone that has been completely tested, and found to be faithful in all things.

In Matthew, chapter 17, we read from verse 1 to 5:

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Self-study: read 2 Peter 1:17, 18; and Hebrews 1

The Love for the many Sons

The desire of the Father's heart is to have an extensive family of sons and daughters and this desire is clearly expressed in scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 6:18, which reads *"And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."*

And also

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

FATHER HEART OF GOD

Servants or Sons?

The Bible makes a clear distinction between people. All people are God's creation, and when a person receives Jesus Christ as Saviour they become a child of God, washed clean and reconciled to Him. Their debt to God is fully paid by the free gift of salvation and the person is now reconciled to God, without any cost to themselves. If you "*confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved*". (Romans 10:9)

Every child of God is not the same, however. Some people have a slave mentality, and do not understand that they are called to be mature sons of God. They act like servants, while their relational position is that of sons.

Servants

Servants are under authority. They have a master who decides what they do, when they do it, and they have no free will or choice. Servants are obliged to serve their master, they have no security and they are at the mercy of their masters.

They serve because they have to, not because they want to. Servants don't share in the profit, they receive a wage. They don't choose when and how to serve, they do as they are commanded. Even if they know who they serve, servants seldom have an intimate knowledge of how their master operate, what the agenda is. Servants obey commands out of fear or out of obligation.

No master shares his vision or plans with a servant. God, as our Father does not want us to be slaves, He actually wants us to mature and step into our roles as sons and daughters fully and completely.

Sons

Let's explore what the Bible teaches us about God's desire for us to be His sons and daughters.

Rom 8:14 - 16 GNB

Those who are led by God's Spirit are God's children. For the Spirit that God has given you does not make you slaves and cause you to be afraid; instead, the Spirit makes you God's children, and by the Spirit's power we cry out to God, "Father! my Father!" (Abba, Father) God's Spirit joins himself to our spirits to declare that we are God's children.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

Galatians 4:6 – 9 GNB

To show that you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father, my Father." So then, you are no longer a slave but a child. And since you are his child, God will give you all that he has for his children.

In the past you did not know God, and so you were slaves of beings who are not gods.

But now that you know God---or, I should say, now that God knows you---how is it that you want to turn back to those weak and pitiful ruling spirits? Why do you want to become their slaves all over again?

Ephesians 1:4, 5 GNB

Even before the world was made, God had already chosen us to be his through our union with Christ, so that we would be holy and without fault before him. Because of his love God had already decided that through Jesus Christ he would make us his children---this was his pleasure and purpose.

Sonship is the foundation of our Christian faith. It's our identity - who we are, our inheritance - what we have, , our authority - what we can do, and our representation - Who we reflect.

Sons (and daughters) have authority. They can act on behalf of the Father because He calls them to govern on His behalf. They have an inheritance and they have intimate knowledge of their father. Sons and daughters have a sense of belonging. They understand that they are part of a family, belong to a kingdom, with a King and therefore they have a sense of responsibility. Sons have a sense of safety and security. They understand the power and authority of their Father, they are secure in His love and they know He holds everything together. Through Jesus Christ Who is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, he upholds the universe by the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3)

Sons have authority over the servants of their father. Whoever is under the father's authority is under the son's authority. What belongs to the father belongs to the son. A son knows his father. He knows what to expect and because of that, feels secure and safe. He works with his father towards a common goal because he has a sense of belonging. He serves his father out of love, gratitude or compassion, not obligation. He cares about the things his father cares about because he loves his father. He obeys rules because he respects his father.

TO SUM UP:

- God has always intended to have sons and daughters, not slaves
- Through Jesus we have been adopted into the family of God
- We have all the rights, responsibilities, authority and privileges of heirs
- The Father's heart is for His children, to love and bless them

FATHER HEART OF GOD

For Reflection:

What lies have you believed regarding God as your Father?

What truths have you uncovered regarding the Father's heart for you?

Do you see yourself as a servant? A worker? A son or daughter?

How would your life be different if you truly believed you were an heir of God?



FATHER HEART OF GOD

The Orphan Heart

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:18

There is an unmistakable cry in the human heart: "Does anybody see me? Does anybody want me? Value me? Care about me? Is there any place that I can truly call home?"

I will share a personal story, to illustrate the orphan heart. Many years ago, when my sons were teenagers, one of them befriended a young man. Let's call him Max.

Max came from a very broken background, where drug abuse, dire poverty and many other very traumatic incidents were the order of the day. He was lost, lonely and in need of a family. His father and brothers were all in jail, and his mother was too broken to take care of him. When my son invited him to stay for the weekend, Max begged us to let him stay, and we did. My husband and I took him out for a coffee and had a long conversation around what it would look like to be a part of our family. We were prepared to treat Max like a son, feed him, clothe him, provide him with a room, and bed and every other privilege our sons had.

In return we would expect him to obey our rules, as we would expect of any of our sons. He would be expected to share in all of the responsibilities of being a part of a family, take care of his chores, clean his room and contribute to the family like every other member would be expected to do. Max was keen to stay and agreed to all of the conditions.

We kept our part of the agreement. We reorganized our home to turn our study into a bedroom for Max. We took him shopping for a bed, clothes and we made sure he had everything he needed. We invited Max to help himself to food and drinks and gave him the freedom to help himself to whatever he needed from the pantry and fridge.

I started to notice that Max would disappear every day around lunchtime. After a few days I asked him about it. He was going to the shop to buy something for lunch every day, and when I asked him why his answer was that he didn't want to eat our food.

Max didn't stay long. Even though his heart's desire was to have a mum and dad, and be part of a functioning family, he could not settle down into it. He still thought and behaved like an orphan. Regardless of what we said, in his heart he didn't want the responsibility that came with being a part of a family, and he didn't love us enough to want to work with us towards a common goal. We tried to take Max out of his orphaned state, but we weren't able to take the orphan state out of Max's heart.

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The Cycle of Grace:

1. Acceptance → 2. Sustenance → 3. Significance → 4. Achievement

Source: From Orphans to Heirs – Mark Stibbe, BRF (the Bible Reading Fellowship), 2005

1. Acceptance: All believers need to know that they are fully accepted by the Father and that this acceptance is freely given through the Son and Holy Spirit.

2. Sustenance: As we are continually filled with the Holy Spirit and we grow in holiness, the sense of being accepted through Jesus, grows in our hearts. This in turn sustains our faith through the joys and sorrows of our Christian walk.

3. Significance: As the love and acceptance of God sustains us we get our value (significance) from who we are, not what we are. As the Spirit agrees with our spirit that we are children of God, we do no longer feel the need to strive. Our search for significance stops as we begin to understand that our position is that of sons or daughters.

4. Achievement: As we understand our position in Christ, as we are sustained and built up by that knowledge, we become motivated to bear fruit as Christians. We do not do good works to earn the Father's approval; we do them because we are confident that we already has His approval.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

THE HEART OF AN ORPHAN

God = Master

Self-reliant

Love of Law

Insecure/lack peace

To impress God, men

Strive for praise, approval of man

Duty, to earn favour or not motivated at all

"Must" to have God's favour

Self-rejection

Counterfeits: addiction, compulsions, hyper-religious activity

Competition, jealousy

Accuse/expose to look good, make them look bad

A source of pain, distrust, lack heart of submission

Difficult to receive, feelings hurt easily and no growth

Guarded and conditional

Conditional and distant
(I am loved when I am good)

IMAGE OF GOD

DEPENDENCY

THEOLOGY

SECURITY

MOTIVE FOR SERVICE

NEED FOR APPROVAL

MOTIVE BEHIND CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES

MOTIVE FOR PURITY

SELF-IMAGE

SOURCE OF COMFORT

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

HANDLING OTHERS' FAULTS

VIEW OF AUTHORITY

VIEW OF REBUKE

EXPRESSION OF LOVE

SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE

THE HEART OF A SON

God = Loving Father

Acknowledge need

Law of Love

Rest and peace

Out of gratitude, love

Accepted in God's love, justified by grace

Pleasure and delight

"Want to be" to please God

Positive and affirmed

Times of quietness, solitude to commune with God

Humility and unity

Love covers; restore in love, gentleness

Respectful, honouring, see authority ministers of God for your good

See rebuke as a blessing, and an opportunity to grow

Open, patient, affectionate

Close and intimate. My Father cares about me, always

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Bondage

CONDITION

Freedom

Feel like a slave

POSITION

Feel like a son/daughter

Spiritual ambition, will strive
to be seen as mature, be accepted

VISION

To daily experience unconditional love,
represent His love to others

Fight for your position

FUTURE

Be released into your inheritance



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FATHER HEART OF GOD

FATHER HEART OF GOD

The Father, as revealed by Jesus

Jesus revealed the Father by His words and actions. He taught about the Father, described the Father in parables and reflected the Father in His actions.

When the disciples asked Him to "show us the Father" He said: *"Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father"* (John 14:9)

The first recorded words of Jesus set the scene for His mission: *"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"*

(Luke 2:49)

The teachings of Jesus were radical because it had an atmosphere of familiarity and intimacy about it:

- Jesus prayed to the Father: "Our Father in heaven, holy is Your name"(Luke 11:2)
- He called God "My Father"
- Jesus worshipped and praised the Father: "I praise You Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke 10: 21)
- Jesus claimed a personal relationship with the Father; "No one knows who the Father is except the Son" (Luke 10:22)
- Jesus claimed that everything He taught was from the Father: "These words you hear are not my own, they belong to the Father" (John 14: 24)
- Jesus' life was lived in absolute obedience to the Father: "I do exactly what the Father has commanded Me" (John 14: 30)

Jesus is encouraging us to adopt exactly the same child-like, unreasoning and intelligent trust towards our Father as it was displayed by His life on earth.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

The Prodigal Son – a Study of the Father's Heart

Read: Luke 15:11 – 32

The story known to us as the story of the prodigal son is actually the story of two sons, and a father. Even though the story is focusing on the wayward son, with a cameo appearance by the older brother, the primary reason for the parable is not to tell us about the two sons, but to describe our Heavenly Father.

Verse 20: *And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. (ESV)*

There are four things Jesus wants us to know about the Father's character:

1. He watches from a long way off – hopes for/anticipates the homecoming
2. He is filled with love and compassion
3. He runs towards his son – a very undignified and unusual thing for a Hebrew man to do
4. He celebrates the return of the son (flings his arms around the son)

Verse 22: *But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. (ESV)*

Let's look at four things Jesus wants us to know about our Father's response to us, by exploring the significance of the following elements:

1. The best robe - It is put on someone of royal stature, as a sign of honour and high esteem
2. The ring placed on his finger would have been a signet ring, a sign of authority and it would have carried the father's seal, indicating delegated authority
3. The sandals signifies the freedom of being a son, as slaves did not wear sandals
4. The fattened calf indicated that a celebration was in order and it speaks of the abundance found in the father's house. In the father's house, only the best is good enough for the son

We can never accept the devil's lies about the character of the Father. Let us agree together that we will believe what Jesus says about the Father.

FATHER HEART OF GOD

The older brother

The older brother paints a picture of most of the body of Christ. They are faithful Christians, live a "good" life, do what they can to be obedient, and serve God diligently through "church" work.

There is a point of the older brother. Even though he was a son, he thought of himself as a servant. His father never indicated that he was one, or that he wanted him to behave or feel like a servant.

As a matter of fact, the Father does not want that – He wants a relationship. The reason the older brother did not rejoice in the return of the younger brother was because he was competing for position from an orphan heart, and did not understand his position as heir.

Sons without healing for their orphan hearts will forever be competing and jostling for position, will find it impossible to rejoice when someone else is elevated or promoted and would want justice and punishment for those they deem to fall short. They will be without grace and mercy, for others and for themselves. They will be harsh taskmasters if they find themselves in positions of leadership.

One final lesson from Jesus is this: I can do nothing on my own but I can do all things through risen Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, when I submit to the authority and will of our heavenly Father.

Jesus did nothing by Himself:

- John 8: 28: "So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.
- John 10: 32: "I have shown you many good works from the Father"
- John 10:35 "Jesus answered, "I did tell you, but you do not believe. The works I do in my Father's name testify about me"

1 John 3: 1

What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are. (Message version)

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (NIV)