

“Abba” in the Aramaic language means “Father”. Only three Scripture verses in the New Testament shared the term Abba. And these were spoken by Jesus and Paul as an intimate term to characterize their personal relationships with God.

Mark 14:36 - “And He [Jesus] said, ‘Abba Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.’” (NKJV)

Romans 8:15 - “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” (NKJV)

Galatians 4:6 - “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba Father!’” (NKJV)

Why would a title that is so seldom used in the Bible be so important in expressing not just the connections of Jesus and Paul with God, but also our relationship with God? This name of God is rich with meaning and implications for our lives.

**THE ABBA-FATHER OF JESUS**

The Abba experience is the source and secret of Jesus’ whole being, His message, and manner of life, and it can only be appreciated by those who share it. Until we encounter the Father of Jesus ourselves and experience Him to be a loving, forgiving Daddy, it is impossible to understand Jesus’ teaching on love. In order to understand His tenderness and passionate love for us, we must always return to His Abba experience. Jesus experienced God as tender and loving, courageous and kind, compassionate and forgiving.

Jesus alone knew God as Daddy. Matthew 11:27 - “...no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (NIV).” With how Jesus addressed God as Abba, we sense the intense intimacy of Jesus with His Father. Here, we touch the heart of His faith. We come to understand the mind of Christ.

In many of Jesus’ time here on earth, He would always get away from the crowd after a day of performing miracles, healing the sick, preaching, and teaching people. He would spend hours alone just talking to His Abba-Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane when He was about to be handed over to Pontius Pilate, in the mountain, on a boat, on the waters. He often withdrew to lonely places to pray and spend uninterrupted time with Abba Father. Jesus would draw strength from Abba Father because He knew His strength came from His Daddy-God.

God is our Father. As a Father, it delights His heart when His children set aside all the striving to spend quality time with Him. How often do we become “oo busy” and distracted by life, filling our days with worries and cares, work and fun, even doing things that we convince ourselves are ‘for God,’ until there’s barely a moment left over to spend time with Him? If parents’ hearts long for meaningful connection with their children, how much more does the Father heart of God long for connection with us, His children?

**THE FATHER HEART OF GOD**

There is one attribute of God that not even the best parent in the world could ever hope to imitate: His ability to be with you all the time. Psalm 139:7-12 - “7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? 8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. 9 If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, 10 even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. 11 If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me,” 12 even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.” (NIV)

Our Father God is constantly with me, every second of every day. He is also with you – constantly, every second of every day. From Heaven’s throne to my human heart flows an uninterrupted stream of love, as though nobody else in the world existed. And the same goes for you.

Bearing this in mind, God could easily think a loving thought towards you at least twice every second without straining His ability to relate to the rest of his children at the same time. Our Father God is never too preoccupied with His own activities to show a real interest in the small events of His children’s lives. He knows and cares about the tiniest detail. He knows what you need. Matthew 6:31-32 - “31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.” (NIV)

**RECEIVING FATHER’S LOVE**

If you’ve grown up thinking of God the Father as distant and angry, it’s hard to immediately think of Him as a loving and gentle Father. Instead, it takes time and revelation to understand the depths of His love for you as a Father. God's love is available to everyone. But God the Father must be revealed to our hearts. It is not enough to read that He is a loving Father but we must allow His love into our hearts to begin to understand the depths of it by beginning to receive His Father’s love, His invitation to accept Him into our hearts.

Another major roadblock to experiencing God’s fatherly love is that not all of us have good relationships with our earthly fathers. It is common for us to project our views about our earthly fathers onto God our Heavenly Father. So, if you saw your earthly father as angry, distant, disinterested, and abusive, then it’s likely that you will see God the same way. Sadly, many people grow up fatherless, so it’s common for many to think that God is uninvolved in their lives completely.

The good news is that we can experience God’s love in a real, actual way. Experiencing that love heals the wounds of growing up fatherless or with a father you weren’t close to. God the Father wants to have a relationship with you and wants to have an active part in your life. In John 14:18, He says, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you (NIV).” In 2 Corinthians 6:18, He says, “And I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” (NIV)

**REFLECTION:**

Think for a moment about the Father-heart of God, our Heavenly Father. Consider God’s heart, both as a way to understand and receive all that God offers to His children and to challenge and encourage you in being someone “after God’s own heart.”

God’s heart is a heart of strength and protection. Over and over again, the Bible speaks of God being our rock, our fortress, our strong tower, our shield, and our defender. The righteous run to Him and are saved.

God’s heart is a heart of wisdom and counsel. One of the names for the Spirit of God is “the Counselor.” Another is The Spirit of Truth, who guides into all truth. God’s Word promises to be “a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.” As the Good Shepherd, He is constantly leading us. When we trust God with all our hearts, He promises to direct our path.

God’s heart is a heart of provision. Beginning with Adam and Eve, God has always been a provider. He provided them with every plant in the Garden of Eden. God provided manna in the wilderness, fed Elijah through the birds, and did not let the flour and oil run out for the widow of Zarephath. It is no wonder that God is called “Jehovah Jireh,” the God who provides.

God’s heart is a heart of love. More than anything else, the heart of the Father is a heart of never-ending, always faithful, freely given, sacrificial love. The Gospel and the whole of the message of the Bible are encapsulated in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” To capture the essence of who God is, John the apostle said, “God is love.” This truly is the heart of our Father.

**What is your picture of God? Is He to you a Creator, Provider, Lord, Savior, Friend?**

God could have picked any foundational name on which to hang His identity. Of course, He reveals Himself as Creator, Provider, Savior, Lord, and Friend. In fact, He reveals Himself by many beautiful names throughout the Scriptures. He could have easily and rightfully chosen the title Great and Awesome, Most Sovereign Holy God.

But this is not what God did. Instead, He revealed Himself essentially as a Father. Our identity? Sons and daughters. Our responsibility? Love. We are only as secure as our concept of who God is. We are only as strong as our revelation of God. Because God is essentially a Father, my identity is essentially anchored in being His child. I am a son. Nothing more, nothing less. Our identity is informed by the nature of God. We are sons and daughters. Our security rests in God’s Fatherhood. Everything else flows from this place of intimacy and security.

When we grasp God’s Father-heart and accept the privilege and responsibility of our identity as children, we are empowered to live life as He intended. Because every child is empowered by the Presence of their Father.

**LIFE GROUP DISCUSSIONS:**

1) What is your picture of God? Is He to you a Creator, Provider, Lord, Savior, Friend, or Father?

2) How would you describe your relationship with your biological father? How does viewing God as a father affect how you relate to Him?

3) Has there been any challenges in understanding and experiencing the Father-heart of God in your life? What has the Lord taught you about your relationship with Our Father in Heaven?