

The Father's Love



What is the Father's Love?

The Father's love is His enduring, loyal, covenant affection, seen in His care, kindness and concern that is set upon us in real ways whereby His grace is shed abroad in our hearts (Isa 63:9; Jer 31:3; Ps 109:21; Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:10).

We see the greatest expression of the Father's love in the giving of His Son (Jn 3:16), whom He loved dearly. We see the Father's love most concretely demonstrated in the way the Son loved us as the Father does (Jn 15:9), which included the giving of His life in obedience to the Father (Jn 10:17).

John 3:35 *The Father loves the Son extravagantly. He turned everything over to him so he could give it away—a lavish distribution of gifts. (MSG)*

Galatians 4:6-7 *Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (NIV) (See also Ro 5:5; 8:14-17.)*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. (NIV)*

Saying "Abba" by the Holy Spirit is a clear declaration of our adoption as sons of God, and an affectionate way of expressing our love to our heavenly Father.

What hinders us from receiving the love of the Father?

1. The sin of idolatry hinders us from receiving the Father's love. Idolatry is really saying that the Father's love is not enough—that I would rather love something more than God.
2. Legalism hinders us from receiving God's love. Legalism is nothing more than an attempt to earn the Father's love through our own works. Good works are important, but God's love is immeasurable. And He loves us now as much as He ever will.
3. Having a distorted Father image will hinder us from receiving the Father's love. Unfortunately, many Christians have a wrong image of God as a Father because they are projecting an incorrect view of their own father onto their heavenly Father. Some people cannot relate to their heavenly Father because their earthly father was overbearing or someone who harshly demanded perfection.

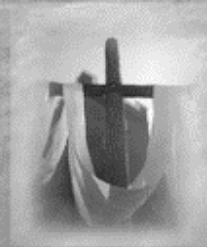
Do you have a hard time coming to the Father in prayer? Do you have trouble imagining His love reaching out to you from the throne? Can you pray to Christ, but not to the Father? Can you imagine Christ's love for you, but have a hard time imagining the Father's love for you? Then your image of the Father is wrong.

In fact, Jesus said that to know Him is to know the Father (Jn 8:19; 14:6-11). What we see reflected in the life of Christ is the heart of the Father. The love, compassion, and caring we so readily relate to in Christ is also the same love, compassion, and caring that comes from the Father. There is no real difference.

A Prayer to the Father - by Pastor Randy Colver

What is this that you have done,
That you would give your only Son?
Who can count the price you paid,
When on his back those stripes were laid?
Did your heart most surely break,
For him whose cross you did forsake?
But was there joy when three days on,
He rose to meet that glorious dawn?

Oh, that I might learn to give,
To suffer well that I might live,
And learn to trust when all is lost,
Recounting all his life did cost.
So to the hills I lift my eyes,
To the Helper of my desires,
To him who gave his only Son,
Who shares the joy that has begun.



What are some wrong Father images?

1. The performance-oriented father.

This father gives love only when it is earned. "God is not austere and distant, but welcomes the love and fellowship of His creatures."¹

2. The passive-oriented father.

This father was absent from the home, uninvolved, and disinterested. But the Bible says that Jesus' desire is that we be one with the Father just as He was (Jn 17:21)—to do and speak the things we see the Father doing (Jn 5:17).

3. The punishing-oriented father.

This father abuses his relationships. He gives unjustifiable pain instead of love. Does God chasten those who sin? Yes, but even His chastening is a sign of His love and is done to teach us (Heb 12:5-6).

How should we understand the love of the Father?

Most of us know Jesus' parable of the Prodigal Son (or The Parable of the Lost Son)—how the rich man's son took his inheritance and spent it all on wild living. But when he had nothing left, and while he was working to feed pigs, he came to his senses and realized he could work as a servant for his father and do better than he could in his present condition. On his way home, do you remember what happened?

Luke 15:20-24 *"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. 'The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"* (NIV)

The lost son's father, just like our heavenly Father, was waiting and longing for the son to return. At the repentance of his son, the father welcomed him home and showered him with extravagant gifts.

This is the heart of our heavenly Father—to love us extravagantly. And you can receive the grace of God to understand His love. You, too, can cry out, "Abba Father."



What must we do to receive the Father's love?

1. Forgive your own father.
2. Repent of any bitterness, self-pity, resentment, and hatred toward your father.
3. Know that the Father loves you (Jn 17:23), receive the Father's love and let your heart cry "Abba" to Him.

¹ Merrill C. Tenney, *Topics from the Gospel of John, Part I: The Person of the Father* (Bibliotheca Sacra, 1975, 132) 43.