

Names of God VIII: “God is not Dead, He’s Dad” June 16, 2019

Our study of God’s names has progressed. We’ve looked at God as, Elohim God. We’ve come to study His special name, YHWH. We’ve looked at some of the names of God that follow YHWH, Jireh or provider, Ropheyka, your healer, Nissi, my banner, Sabaoth, of the armies, Makkadeshkem, the one who makes us holy, and today we will explore the name that Jesus gave us, Abba, or Father. In 2008, the *Los Angeles Times* named the *Time* April 8, 1966 “Is God Dead?” issue among “10 magazine covers that shook the world”.



“God is dead” was a quote from Friedrich Nietzsche, German philosopher who influenced Hitler, Black Sabbath, and the hippies of the 60’s. Some of his quotes: “Faith: not wanting to know what is true.” “You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist.” One of his many “God is dead” quotes, from *The Gay Science, Section 125*: “God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms...” Nietzsche, is long dead. Jesus is still alive. And Jess taught us to call God, not dead, but “dad,”

To Israel, God was king, protector, master, and father figure, but so holy, that even to take His name in vain brought the death penalty. In 27 ad. Israel, feeling forgotten by God, crushed by foreign powers, and oppressed by their priests and religious leaders encountered a Galilean, Jesus of Nazareth. He told them the heavenly kingdom they waited for was really close. He picked up followers, “***And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people***” (Mat. 4:23). Their hope was in a coma. It awakened when this preacher, leader, teacher and healer came. They saw the works and heard the words of this master. His heart piercing preaching, the logic of fascinating teaching, and the raw power of signs and wonders told them something new. God who was a memory of great deeds done in their place for famous and worthy forefathers such as Abraham, Moses, David, Elijah, spoke to them and worked wonders for them once again, in their time. John the Baptist told them so.

Jesus’ fame spread to other countries where relatives and friends of those in Galilee heard the astounding news. “***So his fame spread ...And great crowds followed him...(verses 24-25).***” On a mountain, thousands gathered to hear Him preach His most famous sermon, known as, “The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7).” In it, He introduced His God to them and how to talk to Him, saying, “***Pray then like this: ‘Our Father in heaven (6:9)’***” Jews saw God as the one with the scary name that no one would pronounce, lest they take it in vain and be struck dead. Jesus defied their despair deeper than just the hope that God would be with His people.

Then the preacher, teacher, miracle worker said to call God a name reserved for intimate family, ***Father***. If Jesus is rise from the dead, and anyone who has risen from the dead has got to know what He’s talking about, then: **We must know God as Father, and all that means.**

1 . Come to know God as Father:

17 times in the sermon He said to His audience regarding God, **“Your Father.”** In 8 of those 17 He says that Father God is heavenly. This requires a spiritual relationship, more real and permanent than on earth, but harder for flesh and blood to understand. Also, good works glorify Him (5:16), by loving enemies and praying for persecutors one proves to be His child (5:44-45), He sees in secret and rewards (6:4, 18), one can talk privately to Him, (6:6), He knows our needs (6:8, 32), He’s *our Father together* (6:9), He forgives forgivers (6:14-15), won’t forgive who won’t, feeds birds and us (6:26), gives good things to who ask Him (7:11).

Carrying out the Father role for us:

From these verses we can see that in His Fatherly role He lets us suffer at times, He watches over us and gives rewards, He listens, He is head of a big family, He’s concerned about what we need, forgives, and gives good.

What is required of His children?

The words, **“Hallowed be your name”** after **“Our Father”** (Matthew 6:9) means that His name is holy. As His children we bear His name of holiness. Hallowed or holy means, “belonging to God.” God is holy and belongs to Himself. His children belong to Him. His holiness calls us to be different than those who aren’t in the family. Our role as His children is that we do good works, love enemies like He does, pray to Him, call Him “Father” be forgiven and forgive, and ask him for good things. It also requires the pursuit of perfection, purity, and righteousness. Jesus’ words translated literally, **“You therefore shall be** (a future prediction) **perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect”** (Matthew 5:48). To His children God says, and this is a literal translation, **“You will be holy** (again, a future prediction) **for I (am) holy”** (1 Peter 1:16). In order for a son or daughter of the Heavenly Father to move closer to the the perfection and holiness that will be that son or daughter’s destiny, God will use discipline. God’s discipline however isn’t punishment. Jesus took punishment for sin upon the cross. God’s discipline is for training. **“And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness”** (Hebrews 12:5-10).

Just a reminder: In Greek “sons” is generic for sons and daughters. When the plural refers to both genders, the Greek language defaults to the masculine. To bear His name, and turn out to be the sons and daughters He wants us to become we must share in the holiness of His hallowed name. Unfortunately, holiness isn’t a natural trait to the human condition therefore He will be active in the life of each of His sons and daughters, in a personal and appropriate manner to correct each one toward holiness. Each will experience God’s discipline as He sees necessary for each of His individual children.

2 . We cultivate the kind of relationship Jesus had with the Father.

Jesus wants us to know God as father like He did, doing what He does, saying what He says, and crying out to Him from the deepest part of our souls. Having God as Father means doing what He shows to do, **“So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing”** (John 5:19-20). How would our lives look if we were always doing what the Father showed us? He also spoke only what the Father had Him say, **“I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me”** (John 8:28). How? Do we hear a mystical voice from on high? At times, God clearly speaks to us. But He speaks in another way. Notice what Proverbs 4:20 says, **“My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.”** He’s spoken as a Father *in His word*, if we read it as His children, we’ll experience Him. Try Proverbs as a Father’s guide.

The “Abba” Connection

| | |
|---|--------|
| Word to Learn | Father |
| Hebrew Word <i>(read from right to left)</i> | אבא |
| Pronunciation of Word in Hebrew | Ah-bah |

The night before He died, Jesus prayed in the Garden. In his deepest anxiety, His great struggle to conform His flesh to Father’s will, He cried, **“Abba”** which is “Papa” or “Daddy” (Mark 14:36) from the deepest part of His soul. But those who know the Father have the same privilege, through the

Holy Spirit in us, **“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”** (Galatians 4:6, See also Romans 8:15).

3 . Our relationship with our earthly fathers affects our relationship with the heavenly Father.

What our fathers were or weren’t to us has enormous impact. Some have no father memories or feelings because he wasn’t there, but have gaping holes in their hearts. God will fill in for those who turn to Him as, **“Father of the fatherless”** (Psalm 68:5). For others, their father feelings and memories are of a distant, harsh, or even cruel man who failed to protect, show love and affection, provide, spend time, guide, and too often, even abused, making it difficult to trust heavenly Father because biological dad broke trust. God fills up whatever lacks from our fathers’ failures but we must dare to trust Him. Some, though their fathers’ weren’t perfect, have positive feelings about the man. The danger in this is when one has deep affection and unhindered trust in a man, it’s easy to overlook his sin, overlook God’s holiness and see dad’s sins as acceptable. One reporter told me she believes the gospel is true, but that she wouldn’t convert to Christ because she loves and trusts her non- Christian dad so much that she’d never serve a God who wouldn’t let *him* in heaven!

God gave a serious warning to nations regarding the heart relationship between fathers and children. Nations who refuse to heal the heart relationship between fathers and children will be cursed. Because *He* is Father, God takes the father relationship serious. In the very last verse of the Old Testament, God promises a visitation of a prophet to restore family love, **“And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction”** (Malachi 4:6).

Healing the father relationship starts by forgiving or releasing the anger, resentment, and feeling of debt, (Matthew 6:12, 14-15), making an attempt to reconcile (Mat. 5:24, Romans 12:18, Hebrews 12:14), and if possible, restoration.

We can know God as Father, have a relationship Jesus has with Him, and know how our relationship with our earthly fathers affects ours with Father God. How can one be sure he or she is His child?

Biology gave us physical birth. Because our Father God is heavenly, we have to have a spiritual birth. Jesus said, ***“You must be born again”*** (John 3:7). It comes when one receives Him and believes in Jesus’ name according to John 1:12-13, ***“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”***

He gave the right to call Him “Father” or “Abba” by sacrificing His beloved only begotten Son on the cross and then bringing Him back from the dead. Friedrich Nietzsche, the philosopher famous for saying, “God is dead” was a soul tormented man who died in utter insanity. But Jesus, offers stability and peace for saying, **“God is dad.”** Of all the names for God in the Bible, the name, Abba makes Him family, one who cares passionately for His children, raises them, and who spares none of His infinite love.