

Psalm 145:8-18 p.524

8 The Lord is gracious and merciful,
 slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
 9 The Lord is good to all,
 and his mercy is over all that he has made.
 10 All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
 and all your saints shall bless you!
 11 They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
 and tell of your power,
 12 to make known to the children of man your
 mighty deeds,
 and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.
 13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
 and your dominion endures throughout all
 generations.
 [The Lord is faithful in all his words
 and kind in all his works.]
 14 The Lord upholds all who are falling
 and raises up all who are bowed down.
 15 The eyes of all look to you,
 and you give them their food in due season.
 16 You open your hand;
 you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
 17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways
 and kind in all his works.
 18 The Lord is near to all who call on him,
 to all who call on him in truth.

What is God like?

Gracious
 Merciful
 Slow to anger
 Abounding in steadfast love
 Good to all
 Merciful
 Worth thanking & blessing

Glorious
 Powerful

Mighty
 Splendid

Everlasting
 Enduring

Faithful
 Kind
 Sustainer (upholds)
 Empowering (raises up)

Generous & Open-handed

Satisfying
 Righteous

Near
 Responsive & real/authentic

Psalm 68:4-6 p.481

4 Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
 lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts;
 his name is the LORD;
 exult before him!
 5 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
 is God in his holy habitation.
 6 God settles the solitary in a home;
 he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
 but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

Romans 8:14-17 p.944

14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

John 14:6-11 & 18-20 p.901

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." 9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

18 "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Father God

Booklet – Trinity – Father

What do you think when you hear the word *Father*?

Not many good portrayals of men and fathers on film/tv. When was the last time you saw a portrayal of a father which you could really respect?

A common picture is fathers who have to neglect their children in order to go out and save the planet – usually by shooting someone or blowing them up? Bruce Willis in *Die hard*, Will Smith in *Men in Black*. Often they're separated from their wives.

Then there is idiot father, someone like Homer Simpson?

So much for films: what was your father like?

For many nowadays, a father is just absent. He exists somewhere, or must have existed, but he's never been known. perhaps he went off with someone else. perhaps he became lost to addiction. Perhaps he just died.

Others have the opposite problem: he is there – but is either angry or violent or abusive, or distant and unknowable.

For many, this is all mixed up: a father is there, but gets angry and remains distant. There's no real long-lasting stability, but there is a real, on-going struggle – a struggle for secure attachment and affirming love, which never comes. Perhaps your father appeared to be a good and virtuous man, at work or church, but, confusingly and hypocritically, proved himself to be difficult and dangerous at home,

What was your father like?

Did he speak affirming words, to encourage, support, build up, speak the truth in love? Or did you receive neglect, abuse, hurt and pain from him? Or was he just not there at all?

Fatherlessness is one of the biggest issues of our time. Our experience of fathers will vary a lot – and we should be grateful for any and every aspect of our earthly father which points us to our heavenly fathers

But for some, for many, there is the affliction some writers call *orphan spirit*: whether we're true orphans or not, our souls and spirits are wounded as if we were. Many of us don't realise we've got it – we just have the buried yearning for whole and loving fathers in our lives.

This is a difficult and painful subject for many of us, men and women alike. As we grow up, fathers are meant to call us out, encourage us, guide and direct us to be men and women secure in our identities. Often it doesn't happen. Generation after generation.

At the drop-in, I've seen grown men walk out of the room because this topic has come up, and with it rage and anger, hurt and pain.

And one of the chief tasks for many of us as we grow in our Christian faith, is to get to know God as Father – even, or especially, as the father we never had or never knew, or didn't want to know.

The good news is that God knows and understand, and has done something about it.

As the Daily Prayer shows, **we're meant to address God as Father.**

And that for many of us means we have a lot to learn. Two big things:

1. We have to learn what a true Father is

To whatever extent you had a good earthly father, be thankful, and learn good things from him.

To whatever extent you didn't, re-learn, redefine, what a father looks like. Define 'Father' not by the father you knew or even the father you have been – but by looking at everything Jesus said and did, by taking on what the Bible says about God:

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

8 Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."

9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

2. We have to learn what it means to be a truly loved child, a truly loved son or daughter.

As it turns out, the Bible is full of God's promises to help us in our sins and brokenness. The topic of orphans and fathers and adoption comes up again and again.

Romans 8:14-17 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 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." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 14:18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

Ephesians 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Romans 8:14-17 p.944 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Because of Jesus, we get to be *adopted* into God’s family, not just legally but emotionally too; we are truly his children.

So *Adoption* is a very big deal, not just for human families but for God’s family too. Look at the reading: Ephesians 1:5 says **“He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will”**.

This has always been God’s intention for you. He planned you before the universe was made, and he kept his word and created you in love; then he rescued you and saved you in love; now you’re taken into to God’s family, in love. That’s adoption!

Recently I read this challenge from a Christian writer who said this:

If you are a Christian and you are not convinced of God’s love for you then I would recommend you confine yourself to this topic. Confine yourself to your study to this passage and other passages that reference **adoption**. Confine yourself for a season of time to the study of the doctrine of adoption.

Before we do anything for God, we need to understand this idea of adoption, and we need to understand not just legally or intellectually with our heads, but emotionally and spiritually with and in our hearts as well. We need to know and feel that we belong, that we’re God’s beloved children.

This has been an important part of my story. I grew up very closed off, sometimes very angry, more often very depressed. I couldn’t understand why everything was so confusing and difficult. I wasn’t adopted, but – without going into details – I did have a real sense of unhappiness and brokenness in my family.

But getting my head around this idea of being adopted as a much-loved son into God’s family gradually changed me completely. There was forgiveness for the stuff I did wrong, and healing for all the hurts I’d endured. Getting to know God as my true, Heavenly father helped change me and my perspective own life.

Have you had that realisation yet? If you’re a Christian, do you *know in your heart* that you’ve been rescued and adopted as his son or daughter into his family? If you don’t, then now is the time to learn everything you can about it, let it change you completely, let it give you a whole new identity.

Whatever it is that you try and use to feel okay about yourself, to justify yourself, to make life alright: once you understand your adoption as a child of God through Jesus, nothing else will matter that much any more. You’ll know in your heart that what really matters, what truly keeps you going, what truly makes you everything you’re meant to be is your adoption as God’s child through Jesus.

There was a writer in the 1600s called Thomas Watson, and he wrote a little about what it means to be adopted into God’s Family. I’m going to share some of them now:

If we are children of God, then:

1 God will be full of tender love and affection towards us.

That's what each and everyone of us yearns for deep down: real love and affection. The battle means we've been starved of it, but now, the best love imaginable is freely available to us. It will heal us and strengthen us and make us secure. (Isaiah 40:11 – 11 *He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms*)

2 God will bear with many infirmities. A father bears much with a child he loves.

Yes, we can and do make mistakes – but because we have a Father who loves us, he'll put up with it, and gently correct us, help us and guide us. (Luke 15:11-32 – *Prodigal Sons. Loving Father*)

3 God will accept of our imperfect services. A parent takes anything in good part from his child. God accepts of the will for the deed

(2 Corinthians 8:12 – if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.)”

If you have children, think of a time when you accepted a painting as a present. It probably wasn't a van Gogh or a Rembrandt, but because it was your child that did, you received it gratefully. God receives our imperfect service even more lovingly!

4 God will provide for us. A father will take care for his children. He gives them allowance and lays up a portion (2 Corinthians 12:14). So does our heavenly Father.”

God will provide for us; we don't have to worry any more, because he's promised to give us what we need, and more, as we trust and pray. (Matthew 6:25-33 – v32 your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.)

If we are children of God, then:

5 God will shield off dangers from us. A father will protect his child from injuries. God ever lies sentinel to keep off evil from his children temporal evil; spiritual evil.

Whether we realise or not at this point, we've all been hurt in the battle against the world, human nature and the devil. But when we're in the family, we automatically get extra protection; our heavenly Dad is looking out for us, and will protect us. (Ps 91 – He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

2 I will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence.)

6 God will reveal to us the great and wonderful things of his law. ‘I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and you have revealed them to babies’ (Matthew 11:25).”

We'll start to know and understand more about God and his ways, more about Jesus and the way things are really meant to be. He'll give us real wisdom – more even than the brainiest people on the planet get to understand!

If we are children of God, then:

7 **This gives us boldness in prayer.** The child goes with confidence to his father, and he cannot find in his heart to deny him: 'How much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him!' (Luke 11: 13)."

Children don't naturally hang back in asking for things! They just come out with it, over and over again. We don't have to hold back any more either: God loves us and wants to come up to him boldly and ask him and trust him for all kinds of things.

8 **We are in a state of freedom.** ...the children of God, though they are not free from the in-being of sin, yet they are freed from the law of sin." (Romans 8:9-15; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

We're free; we're made new. We don't have to go on sinning, go on doing wrong and damaging things. Addiction, violence, pride, anger, despair: we can learn to leave it behind, become a new creation, and grow in the family likeness. Freedom!

9 **We are heirs apparent to all the promises.** There are so many good things promised in the Bible, in this life and the next: because we're children, we have an inheritance! Everything is going to be alright – and more than alright! (Romans 8:16-17)

10 **We shall have our Father's blessing.** 'They are the seed which the Lord has blessed' (Isaiah 61:9)."

Do you suffer from a sense of condemnation? Or from arrogance and pride? Instead of that, we can simply enjoy God's favour, without putting ourselves down or puffing ourselves up. Our heavenly Father loves and blesses us like no earthly father ever could. (Colossians 2:13-14; Numbers 6:22-27 – The Lord bless you and keep you;
25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace)

11 **All things that fall out shall turn to our good.** 'All things work together for good to them that love God' (Romans 8: 28): good things; evil things." Once we're adopted into the family, then there is nothing left which God can't use for our benefit. The battle will go on for the rest of our lives – but once we're adopted into the family, everything that happens will turn to our good, and nothing will ever be able to separate us from God and his love ever again - not sin, not death, not the devil, not hell. Jesus came and paid the price, died for us on the cross, and that means there is no longer any barrier, legal or emotional, to us taking our place as God's children. (Romans 8; – And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose; Ephesians 1:5 – in love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will)

Now: Knowing all that – *really* knowing that – will change us, and it will change the way we respond to the Bible and to God and to the world around us. We won't be embarrassed or dismissive any more; we'll be full of the joy of our salvation and of knowing our God. We'll sense his love and freedom as we worship, and want to worship more loudly and freely and openly than ever before.

And it means we'll become the sort of people who can help others like Jesus said and did, not out duty, not out of a sense of obligation, not out of fear of what others will think or say – but out of that huge river of God's love flowing in us and through, and out of all the gratitude and joy which come from being part of his family, from being one of his children.

Life can be tough. One way or another, the world, our own faults and failings, and the devil have conspired to beat us up and leave us for dead, Jesus has come and rescued us, paid every price for our forgiveness and healing. And he has seen to it that we can fulfil our destiny as God's

children, adopted into his family, with all the benefits and all the love that brings us.

“Do you know you’re adopted? Do the words closeness, affection, and generosity describe your perception and experience of God? Do they? If not, perhaps you are more aware of your sin than you are the adopting grace of God.

Once you understand your adoption, you won’t rely on your strength or achievements to give you your identity and security.

Once you understand your adoption, you won’t rely on what people say or think about you to give you your identity and security.

Once you understand your adoption, you won’t rely on your status or your role to give you your identity and security.

Once you understand adoption, you won’t want to rebel against God the Father and reject, or mistrust him, or fear him.

John 14:18 “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

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Prayer!

1. We have to learn what a true Father is
2. We have to learn what it means to be a truly loved child, a truly loved son or daughter.

Forgive. Start to forgive. Grace means we don’t condemn, and we don’t condone: sinning and being sinned against matter.

Be open to a new understanding of God as Father

Be open to his affirming voice

Be loved.

The Lord bless you and keep you;

25 the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

26 the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.