

# God the Father

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[ 0 : 00 ] I have never used this word about myself ever before, but as I prepared this message, I thought I can do this. I was raised as a theist, or more specifically, I was raised as a monotheist.

I was raised to believe in one God, to pray prayers at night that were addressed as dear God, sent to Sunday school where Jesus was a bit of a mystery, important but not as important as God, the man.

And I think I had a mindset of, why would you talk to this number two when you could talk to the main man? And if I was raised, or had been raised in a Muslim family, I would have been taught similar things about God.

When I was confirmed at 14, I think I had a sincerity of heart, I wanted to honour God, but Jesus still made no specific sense. So when God shone his light and broke into my heart at 18 years of age, the most dramatic change in my thinking was twofold.

God showed me that I deserved to be judged by him. I understood for the first time that I really didn't deserve special favours. I was immediately afraid. And the second thing he did was show me that Jesus had stood in my place, that he had taken the judgment that I deserved, and I was thrilled and thankful for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and he became the new centre of my world.

[ 1 : 32 ] Knowing Jesus was the beginning of a journey to know his Father, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a journey which is ongoing, and it will not stop this side of heaven.

And so as I live with Jesus Christ as my Lord, I am still learning about the sheer goodness and supremacy and love and power and provision of his most magnificent Father.

Really interesting this morning to hear the job description of a dad you came up with. I wish I'd had that in mind when I was preparing this message, because it reflects the nature of God himself and what we know of him.

But the big point that I'm making this morning, if you walk away with nothing else, I want you walk away with this, that the only way to know the true God and Father, the only way to know the true God and Father, is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In John 14, Jesus is talking about returning to his Father's house in heaven. And Thomas says to him, Lord, we don't know the way, we don't know where you're going, so how can we know the way?

[ 2 : 42 ] And Jesus replies, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. I mean, this day and age, that is one of Christianity's most offensive claims to a lot of people.

The only way that God the Father can be known is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and any other attempt is futile and false. And we make this claim confidently because it is straight from the mouth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philip says to Jesus in John 14, verse 8, Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us. And Jesus replied, Don't you know me, Philip?

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. The Lord Jesus Christ is the one who reveals God the Father.

The only way to know the true God and Father is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Matthew chapter 11 says something similar.

[ 3 : 50 ] Jesus says, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

We do not come to know God the Father by the power of our own intellect. We know him because of the gracious gift of his Son.

The only way to know the true God and Father is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So this morning is the second of two messages that focus on the God of the Bible.

The second of two messages, we're doing more than two messages. Who he is, how he's revealed himself. I said last week that we have to keep a fair bit of humility when trying to know God and describe God and talk about God.

[ 5 : 05 ] We don't know everything. We only know as much about God as he chooses to reveal about himself, and to go any further is to move into the realm of speculation and error.

I want to put a few more pegs in the ground today which focus on God revealing himself to us as Father. We're exploring the doctrine of the Trinity. It's a word that the early church used to describe how God reveals himself as three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And we've been saying, and we'll say again and again throughout this series, that the Scriptures clearly teach the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God.

But they also clearly teach the Son is not the Father, the Father is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Son. Describing God is in some sense like trying to describe the indescribable.

Sometimes you have to hold to truth that seems illogical and contradictory. We can only describe what we see.

[ 6 : 23 ] We do not see the whole picture. Despite all the confidence that scientists sometimes speak with, they're like that. And what they teach us about light, they tell us that it, when they teach us about light, they'll tell us that it displays the form and behaviour of waves.

But they'll also teach us that light displays the form and behaviour of particles. Two different substances doesn't easily fit logic, but it is what it is.

I was wonderfully surprised as I prepared this message and actually quite excited. I did a search of the whole of the Bible with my concordance for the number of times or the places where the word Father is used.

And you push the button on your computer and you get more than a thousand references. And when you get rid of all the human references, such as Abraham was the father of Isaac and he was the father of Jacob and all that sort of reference in the Bible, you get a much shorter list.

And you discover, or I saw for the first time, that there are very few references to God as Father in the Old Testament. Very few.

[ 7 : 43 ] And most of them are associated with God's relationship to King David and the promises that he makes to him. So probably the high point of David's reign is in 2 Samuel chapter 7 when God promises to build a dynasty from him.

And it says, The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you when your days are over and you rest with your fathers. I will raise up your offspring to succeed you who will come from your own body.

And I will establish his kingdom. And he is the one who will build a house for my name. And I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father and he will be my son.

And when he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men and with floggings inflicted by men. But my love will never be taken away from him as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me and your throne will be established forever. Psalm 2 carries the same idea or similar ideas.

[ 9 : 02 ] He says, I have installed my king on Zion, my holy hill. I will proclaim the decree of the Lord. He said to me, You are my son. Today, I have become your father.

Ask of me and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. And it's there as well in Isaiah. It's in a reading that we read at Christmas all the time.

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end and he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on forever.

And the zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this. It's not as clear but amongst his other titles this son will also be known as Mighty God and Everlasting Father.

[10:09] Those three passages are passages which are all looking towards a future day, a future king, a future son who will reign on behalf of his father.

And the Old Testament begins to anticipate what will be revealed with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So I want you to see that in some ways our understanding of God as father grows as the passages of the Bible unfold and as God's king is revealed.

It's not always there to be seen explicitly. It becomes much more explicit as you move through the Bible and into the New Testament. So when you get to Matthew chapter 3 that God and Father speaks at the baptism of his son and he says, this is my son whom I love and in him I am well pleased.

You discover as you read the Gospels that the normal way for Jesus to speak about God is as father. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 to 7 Jesus continually reveals God as father.

Matthew chapter 5 verse 44 So the implication is that we and from the Lord Jesus Christ himself we have a merciful father.

[11:37] When we love our enemies we reflect the heart of God. He is a God who sustains the whole earth. The goodness and the bounty of creation is enjoyed by all his creatures.

It's the kindness of our heavenly father that even an atheist like Richard Dawkins can sunbake on the beach that he can enjoy the cooling of the waters that he can savour a Jamie Oliver meal that he can know an intimate relationship with his wife.

God has made things so that even unjust people or people of evil intent can enjoy his creation. I could go to lots of places and I really do feel like I'm scratching the surface and that's not just a throwaway platitude but go to Matthew chapter 6.

Jesus makes huge revelations about the fatherhood of God. He's a father who knows our hearts. We can't pull the wool over his eyes. We're not to be hypocrites going through acts of religious devotion to draw attention to ourselves and our own self-righteousness.

So he says to us when you give or when you pray or when you fast don't do those things to impress people. Do them out of relationship with your wonderful heavenly father. This is not religious duty.

[12:52] He's the one who is able to reward us and to forgive us for our sins. And then he moves into the Lord's prayer giving further insights into the nature of God's fatherhood.

This is how you should pray. Our father in heaven hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive men when they sin against you your heavenly father will also forgive you.

But if you do not forgive people their sins your heavenly father will not forgive your sins. So Jesus does a bucket load of things in that prayer.

[13:53] He teaches us to address God as father. And that's a new way of relating to God that has never been seen before in the scriptures. Jesus himself addresses God with a particular reverence and intimacy as a son.

In Mark's gospel in the garden of Gethsemane he says Abba Father everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will but what you will.

In calling God Father he uses a word that only a true son would be permitted to use. Steve's example with his kids this morning. all the loving respect and reverence of dad but with no irreverence or inappropriate familiarity like old man or Steve or whatever it is.

Our father in heaven his dwelling place is heaven he lives in a realm that we can't enter into yet except through prayer we can't see and he has this glorious name that is to be treated with the utmost reverence and respect.

Your kingdom come assumes that the kingdom of God the father is established in heaven but is still being established on earth and not everyone submits to his reign and rule so when we pray for the coming of God's kingdom we're actually praying for men and women and boys and girls to submit to his reign and to the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[15:32] Give us today our daily bread he's a father who we can come to for what we need he is our provider. I wish I could tell you the detail of this I can't really but I can tell you that this week I had to bring some needs to him which were clearly beyond my own resources to manage and were quite overwhelming.

And you know in those moments when you ask for help and you're in pain and one of the things you really want God to do is just take away the pain? He did deal with the pain but in a way that I didn't expect by helping me and others to rise up and to face the difficulty and to walk through the pain with a trust and firm trust in the goodness of God and in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He reversed the difficulty and he caused me and others to grow through that difficulty. He knew what I needed. Further down in Matthew 6 the father is revealed as a provider who knows our bodily needs of food and clothing.

Matthew chapter 10 says the hairs of our head are numbered and a sparrow doesn't die without him even knowing about it. Matthew 7 says that God is a good father eager to give good gifts to his children.

The father is a powerful provider. He's all knowing. He delights to provide for his children bountifully. And the father is forgiving.

[17:06] Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. We are to reflect the character of our father.

We come to know him through the forgiveness that we have in Christ. it necessarily follows that we will display his character as we forgive people who have hurt us.

He invites us to ask him for forgiveness while presuming that we will show mercy and forgiveness to others. He tells that ugly parable in Matthew's gospel about the man who is forgiven a huge and unpayable debt and who then goes out and abuses another man who owns a pittance and he says such a man will come under the judgment of God.

Jesus also reveals God as a father who loves. John 3 16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

there are some modern theologians out there who have caused the precious things of God to be trampled on. They accuse God the father of what they call cosmic child abuse in sending his son to do his dirty work on the cross.

[18:32] And it's become a very popular little refrain which is repeated around the world and by numbers of people who stand outside the faith. And it is effectively an injustice, an accusation of injustice against God.

And that could be a sermon in itself. But think about what I'm preaching today. It is the son who reveals the father.

And the son shows us his character and his nature. And right here in John's gospel the son who sees the bigger picture, the son who knows the father, the son insists that the father's sending of him was an extraordinarily loving act.

It was driven by the father's love for a world that was in rebellion against him. We should listen to him. The scriptures also reveal the father to be supreme and also to be humble.

1 Corinthians 15 where Adam read to us focuses on the impact of Jesus Christ rising from the dead, the resurrection. verse 24, the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

[19:49] For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death for he has put everything under his feet. Now when it says that everything has been put under his feet it is clear that that does not include God himself who put everything under Christ.

Christ and when he has done this then the son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him so that God may be all in all. There is clearly order in relationship between the father and the son.

The father is the supreme authority. The kingdom of God is his. the son is his regent and he conquers through his death and resurrection and having done his magnificent work he hands the kingdom back to his father and the son is subject to him.

Probably say more about this next week when the focus is on the son and his work. But to put it really simply is to say that there is an authority structure in the Godhead in the way that they relate to one another.

The spirit glorifies the son. The son gives glory and directs his attention to his unseen heavenly father. He gives him the glory and he submits to his authority.

[21:22] authority. When I use the words authority and submission I hope that you see that they are rooted in the sheer magnificence and goodness and love and power and provision and planning of God the father who is revealed to us through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The father has a certain humility about him because he absolutely delights in the work of his son. He exalts him. At the end of the Bible in Revelation 21 the lamb shares the throne of God with his father.

They both sit on the throne together. The son delights to yield to his heavenly father and he calls us to do the same.

Now words like authority and submission don't sit well with us. Especially in Australia. We think of ourselves as egalitarian. Nobody's better than anybody else.

We chop down tall poppies. We try to put people in authority in their place whether it be the Prime Minister of Australia or the Rector of the Church whoever it is and we do not always readily submit to their leadership.

[ 22 : 41 ] But the scriptures show us that there is order and relationship in the Godhead. Father, Son, Holy Spirit are in a relationship with the Father where the Father is clearly supreme.

The mission of the Lord Jesus Christ reveals to us this unseen Father. He helps us to see him and to know what he's like. He is supreme over all.

He is magnificently good. The Son delights to submit to him and he teaches us that our highest good is to know him and to submit to him as well.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians begins by declaring the nature of God and it finishes in chapters 5 and 6 with very practical understandings or applications to relationships in both family and work relationships based on who God is.

So it actually says our human relationships should be governed by the nature of God himself. So marriage in Ephesians 5, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

[ 23 : 51 ] Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. To make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless.

Mutual submission, a wife who delights to submit to and honour her husband. husband. A husband who generously and self-sacrificially loves his wife with the sort of love that is seen in the Godhead. Not self-centred, selfish and self-obsessed but giving generously for the benefit of the other. Most of us know something less than the ideal.

We know where we rub in relationship. Some of us may carry very deep and unresolved pain. I read a book by John Piper in January which called this Impermanent Marriage saying that our relationships in this life are temporary but the one we have with God into the future is permanent.

[ 25 : 25 ] And it helped me to think about this passage in a fresh way because as difficult as life and relationships sometimes are, God has given us the privilege in our relationships of reflecting something which is even greater than us.

Him. And so for a believer marriage and relationships are not firstly about us. They are about God and they are about God's glory.

So the husband who lives with a wife who doesn't respect him but who continues to love his wife with abundant love and providing generously for her in a way that reflects the nature of our heavenly father.

Or a wife with an oppressive husband, a wife who still seeks to honour him in a way which reflects the devotion of Christ to his heavenly father in loving the church.

Kerry's done that for me in my marriage. There have been times in my marriage where when it has been all about me or all about my ministry.

[ 26 : 41 ] I couldn't see it. Kerry could. And she has lived with the pain and the oppression of it and sometimes challenging me but fearing that I would respond with my self-protecting and self-justifying wrath to close her down.

And she has loved me with a Christ-like love in ways which I often did not appreciate and even found hard to believe and receive what she was giving.

You see there is rich blessing to be had in our marriages if we would look to God and the nature of the relationship between the father and the son.

Men, if we look to the father we would see how much he loves, esteems, trusts and delights in his son.

He shows us how to generously or use authority with generosity to those that we have responsibility and accountability for. Thinking is transferable to the workplace.

[ 27 : 59 ] I could go there. I could go to the Christian workplace. I could go to the secular workplace. Ephesians chapter 6, slaves serving whatever master, serve them all good or bad but serving them as though you were obeying Christ and doing it for his glory.

Or masters treating slaves in such a way, employers treating slaves to their employees in such a way that they reflect that they know that they are accountable to a heavenly master. To grow in knowledge of the father is to grow in our knowledge of ourselves.

Who the father is helps us to know how we are to function in the difficult crucible of human relationships.

I told you at the beginning my journey from theism to Christ. I didn't monotheism to Christ. I didn't understand what God was doing at the time.

I now know that Christ was carrying me on a journey which is about knowing his father. It's an ongoing journey. I am secure in Christ, absolutely safe in him.

[ 29 : 15 ] But I am only a minnow in understanding the depths of the wisdom of the knowledge of God. But one thing I do know, that the only way to know the true God and father is through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing the father will be transforming of all human relationships. And so a good question for me, and I think it's a good question for you as well.

In my family, in my roles in my workplace, do I reflect the nature of my heavenly father and his relationship with his son?

Amen.