

My Father Is ...

Pastor Ken

Week 1, August 6, 2023

Each of us are hard-wired by God with a Father Hunger

⁸ Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us. ⁹ Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. (John 14-NIV)

Scripture tells us that God is our Father. And because God is our Father, we are hard-wired with a Father Hunger. God is not just like a father; He is the Father of each of us. Let me be more specific, He is the Father of all who claim Christ as their Savior.

No one who rejects Christ, benefits from a Father's love. From a Father's provision. From a Father's protection. Since Christ and God, the Father are so enmeshed, so immersed, so infused together - no Christ, no Father.

That leaves a vast majority of humans on this planet- fatherless.

...for in you the fatherless find compassion. (Hos 14:3-NIV)

...Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you sent me. John 17:21-NIV)

So, since God is our Father and like a Father it might seem shocking, but I think God's word ought to have more teaching on this topic. Why does the idea of God as father, seem to be so undeveloped? For many reasons, the idea of God as Father is missing in so much of Christians spiritual formation, including in myself.

Scripture offers a clear and concise relationship with the God (Elohim, Adonai, Jehovah Jirah), of the Old Testament who we meet through his many names.

Scripture offers a clear and concise relationship with the second member of the trinity, Jesus Christ in the New Testament, but a relationship with God as Father seems to be sparsely presented. Pastor, do you have an answer as to why? Truthfully, no!

While most Christians know God as their Father, many would rather experience their faith through with Jesus.

Why is that? In climbing the spiritual formation mountain with God, many of us have decided to stay at basecamp of a relationship with Jesus Christ, rather than go all the way to the summit with God as Father and experience a full territorial view of his purposes and plan for our lives.

This might surprise you. Is it really possible, that Jesus reference to God as Father is sparsely scattered throughout scripture? Even the idea of God as Father, as you will learn, rarely shows up in the OT.

Jesus heaviest dose of Father-Son teaching is found in John 14 and John 17. Then don't forget that amazing parable of the Prodigal Son and Loving Father story in Luke 15. Added to my concern.... Scripture seems to lack many good father-son examples.

You don't have to travel far into the book of Genesis to see that so many fathers are more like stumbling blocks, than building blocks, helping a child soar. A quick fly over of some biblical dad's shortcomings, perhaps will bring this idea into focus.

Jacob showed favoritism to a youngest son, this got Joseph into hot water with his brothers. Thrown into a pit. Sold into slavery. It was a 20-year family lie, which shaped the future and outcome of this patriarch's family. You can read about it in the life of Joseph, in Gen 37-50.

King David neglected to provide family leadership and discipline, which eventually resulted in his son, Absalom attempting to overthrow David's kingdom. You can read about it in 2 Sam 15-19.

One generation later, his son Solomon who succeeded David as King, turned to idolatry and immorality as the nation of Israel was plunged into civil war.

Perhaps you are unfamiliar with my last illustration of dead-beat dads, the boys' name is Jephthah, and his story is found in Judges 11. A skilled bows man, a tough as nails warrior, but it was his dad's immorality that sent Jephthah fleeing the family nest.

Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty warrior. His father was Gilead; his mother was a prostitute. ² Gilead's wife also bore him sons, and when they were grown up, they drove Jephthah away.

"You are not going to get any inheritance in our family," they said, "because you are the son of another woman." ³ So Jephthah fled from his brothers and settled in the land of Tob, where a gang of scoundrels gathered around him and followed him. (Judges 11-NIV)

The family disfunction drove one of Israel's judges, a deliverer right into the hands of the enemy. Years later Israel needs some leadership to defeat the Amalekites, and somebody remembers the young warrior deliverer and so the elders go searching for their would-be hero.

When the elders find him, they attempt to enlist Jephthah as their judge deliverer. Notice, the cloud of mistrust that settles over the negotiations.

⁷ Jephthah said to them, “Didn’t you hate me and drive me from my father’s house? Why do you come to me now when you’re in trouble?”

⁸ The elders of Gilead said to him, “Nevertheless, we are turning to you now; come with us to fight the Ammonites, and you will be head over all of us who live in Gilead.” ⁹ Jephthah answered, “Suppose you take me back to fight the Ammonites and the Lord gives them to me—will I really be your head?” (Judges 11-NIV)

Relationships that are damaged in a child’s foremost years of growth tend to leave lasting pain, scars, and mistrust in the lives of kids who are now adults.

And from a scriptural, psychological, and scientific point of view, this is what makes it so hard for many who become Christians, to know and grow in a relationship with God as their Father.

The landscape of humanity is filled with many still searching for approval. Searching for a dad-like figure.

Everyone one of us long for a father’s approval. Many experience it, and many do not. Many go through life attempting to recreate the missing father relationship. One third, if not more of the women in prisons today, reveal that they are fatherless. The need for a father is not simply the search for a dad, it is the search for what a father provides to the child:

*Acceptance

*Affirmation as identity

*Approval

*Affection as love

*Authority as protection

Not to mention an abundance of other benefits such as trust, leadership, values, and most of all spiritual formation through Christ.

When a person’s relationship with dad, gets damaged, men and women both go on a search to fill the void many authors call **Father Hunger**. Some of the most noted celebrities and most famous movies to come out of Hollywood have been made about this theme. The search and discovery of Father Hunger.

“Hey, dad wanna have a catch. Yea, I’d like that,” the most famous father hunger reunion statement to ever come out of Hollywood. Kevin Costner goes on a father hunger search to find a way to play catch with his deceased dad, in Field of Dreams.

Louie Anderson, a rotund and boyish comedian spent his life using humor to cover up the pain of a dad's alcoholism and unsuspecting death. Many of his comedy vignettes are really a father hunger comic set, as he copes with the anger of an absentee dad.

J. Paul Getty was once the wealthiest man in the world. While in high school, the young J. Paul Getty wrote a letter to his dad. His father returned it to young Getty with the grammatical and spelling errors corrected. A personal note of approval was never found.

Marvin Gaye churned out hit after hit in the 60's and 70's with songs like Aint No Mountain High Enough and Heard It From The Grapevine. At one point when Motown renewed his contract, Marvin Gaye demanded a million dollars in cash, placed neatly in a briefcase. Marvin wanted to show his dad how successful he had become, longing to fill the void left by a Father Hunger.

Tennis star Christ Evert, racing phenom Bobby Allison and even Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher all carry a deep longing of Father Hunger.

How many kids after achieving success looked into the stands, into the audience, sat across from a table or road in a car, listening or looking for approval and acceptance from a dad.

It is stories like these and others that remind us how powerful and personal the need to satisfy the Father Hunger longing is. And each of us possess such a hunger.

It is so easy for God's word to live in our head and not make it to our hearts. Western Christians are more cerebral than celebratory. More cerebral than connected. More cerebral than experiential.

We know theologically that God is our Father, but practically that is an idea we need to grow.

We know doctrinally that God is our Father, but dutifully all this leads to is a works mentally instead of a worship mentality.

We know that God is our Father scripturally, but we struggle with that idea spiritually. Deep down many are uncomfortable with a relationship with God as Father.

As a follower of Christ, you are more than a servant, you are a son. A daughter.

As a follower of Christ, you are more than a soldier, you are a son. A daughter.

As a follower of Christ, you are more than a sojourner on your way to heaven, you are a son. A daughter.

As a follower of Christ, you are more than a disciple, you are dad's son. Dad's daughter.

Perhaps, you would benefit from some biblical instruction about a relationship with God as your Father. Anybody here today want some of that?

Everything that Christ taught, everything that Christ did, everything that makes the New Testament a fulfillment of the Old, that which makes our faith Christ centered as opposed to merely Jewish is summed up and described in our relationship with God as our Father.

Father is the Christian name for God.

The redeemed and blood bought Christian never needs to go through life, searching another minute to find fulfillment to a Father Hunger. Jesus promise to each of us from the most extensive chapter on Fatherhood, John 14, we discover 23 times the name Father is identified. The gold standard verse is *John 14:18, I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.*

So, let's build on this idea and focus the next few minutes on why the name Father is so important. Names are important because they provide a method of identification.

God is known in the Old Testament by his name. His name provides qualities that he offers to each of us.

Jehovah Jirah my provider.

El Shaddai, the God of all power.

Jehovah Shalom, the God of peace.

Names are important because they are means by which God reveals himself. Names are important because it often tells us about what the relationship with God can look like. When you know the divine name for God, you can invite his presence and power into your situation.

Jacob understood the value of a divine name, so he wrestled the angel of the Lord, he pleaded all night until God's name was revealed. Jacob said, *"Please tell me your name."* But he replied, *"why do you ask my name?"* Then he blessed him there. (Gen 32:29-NIV)

When Moses met God as the burning bush and was given the commission to deliver God's people from bondage. Moses argued with God and said, "unless I know your name, nobody is going to believe me. ¹³ Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" (Exodus 3:13-NIV)

It doesn't take a lot of study, even just a casual reading of the Old and New Testament to notice this truth about the names of God. In the Old Testament God is identified by many names, in the New Testament God is identified with one-Father.

The reason we study the names of God is because this is one of the ways that God reveals himself to us. What is the significance of knowing God's name? (1) You are told to honor his name, (2) you are invited to worship his name and (3) you are protected by his name.

(1) You are told to honor his name. In the 10 commandments, God has told us to honor his name in Exodus 20:7, you shall not take the name of the Lord in vain. This is so much more than merely avoiding God's name in slang or profaning his name. When you live in a redemptive relationship with God, you are accountable to reflecting his character and name.

(2) You are invited to worship his name. Another reason to study God's name is it will provide for you and experience with God through worship. God is worthy of worship, because of the greatness of his name. We see this in Psalm 8:1, Psalm 48:10, Psalm 75:1, and Psalm 76:1.

O Lord our Lord, How majestic is your name in all the earth. As a Christ follower your Father Hunger, is really your hunger to worship his name.

(3) You are protected by His name. And finally, you need to know God's name because God's name is a fort, is a refuge, is a strong tower that offers protection to the Christ follower.

*The name of the Lord is a fortified tower;
the righteous run to it and are safe. (Prov 18:10-NIV)*

Some of you are under attack. You need protection. You need to be rescued. You need a safe place to hide out until this attack blows over. The name of the Lord is a refuge, a strong tower, in times of trouble as Psalm 46:1 indicates. And that refuge is God's name.

In this series, My Father Is... I will be attempting to convince you scripturally and theologically; **God's favorite name is Father**. Or to put it another way, of all the names for God, **Father is God's favorite**.

Ok, like a scientist, let me show you, my research. God loves this name the most because this is the one that he used so often. While on earth Jesus called God Father over 200 times.

Jesus' mission is redemption, and reflection of God as our Father.

If you have been at Bethel Life Center very long, you we notice we talk about Jesus as our substitutionary atoner a lot. He covers our pile of sins.

²⁴ *“He himself bore our sins” in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24-NIV)*

We know what a substitute is, someone who stands in on our behalf. And atoner, this means someone who pays the price for your wrongdoing. Substitutionary atoner is one of Jesus favorite roles.

I think along with redemption, Jesus does not get a lot of recognition for his role in reflection. **Jesus is a mirror of who God is as Father.** In the first words recorded by Jesus he solves the mystery, of where he has been. Mary and family have been frantic looking for him in Luke 2.

After their time in the temple Mary and Joseph go on a journey home, and Jesus goes on a journey back to the temple. ⁴⁹ *“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49-NIV)*

In Jesus final triumphant prayer, Jesus says, ⁴⁶ *Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.”^[a] When he had said this, he breathed his last. (John 14-NIV)*

Jesus opening words in the gospel, I am hanging out with dad (my Father), and at the end, he tells his Father he is ready to come him.

In the gospel of John alone, Jesus points to the Father, reflects the Father, by repeating his name 156 times. 23 in our opening chapter of John 14, alone.

God loves to be called Father. After all, didn’t Our Heavenly Father teach us to call him Father? Jesus tells us that when you pray use the phrase, Our Abba!”

Jesus also tells us that He is the only one that can direct us to God as our Father. So, Jesus is the way, directing us to God as our Father.

When God wanted to reveal himself as Father, there was only one person in the universe that could do that. Jesus. The reason that Jesus came was not just redemption, he came for reflection. To be a mirror of God as Father.

Jesus brought a revelation that no Old Testament text, prophet or person could bring. A revelation of God as our Father.

⁶ *Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you really know me, you will know^[b] my Father as well. (John 14-NIV)*

Now, think about this with me. Perhaps it has slipped past your vast theological mind. Jesus is the way, but the Father is the destination.

Where is the way or road leading? To the Father. For 1000's of years God's people knew God as Jehovah, Yahweh, a name which was so sacred God's people would not even pronounce it. Only write it. God's people would now know that name, Jehovah, Yahweh, El Shaddai as...

Now God's people would know him as Abba. Aramaic for Father. What was the name that Jesus revealed to his disciples. As you read John 14, you will discover it is the name Father. Jesus came to manifest the name of the Father.

The word manifest means, Jesus did not just come to give an introduction. To talk about God as Father. He came to manifest. Jesus came to reveal and demonstrate who God Father was. By doing the works of the Father and offering the words of the Father.

¹¹ Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. (John 14:11-NIV)

Jesus revealed the Father by living as a son of the Father. He was never frightened of the Father. He never failed to know what to do. He never lived in despair or anxiety about his future. In fact, again John 17, tells us the goal of this revelation is to bring us into a relationship with God the Father and His Son Jesus, we get to join that tribe. God the Father wants you was a son, like Jesus is a son.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. (John 17:21-NIV)

Jesus lived knowing he had a Father in heaven. Jesus whole life was motivated to manifest God as Father. That's why Jesus came. Only a son, can introduce a Father. Jesus who mission is summed up in Matt 11:27,

²⁷ "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. (Matt 11-NIV)

I cannot reveal the Father. No preacher can reveal the Father. Only Jesus Christ can reveal the Father. And he is revealed in God's word, through the power of the Holy Spirit. If you are to know God as your Father, it happens through Jesus.

As I bring this first teaching, this first talk, this first sermon to an end, let me suggest 3 experiences and 3 transformations that will happen in the power of the Holy Spirit, if you begin and grow your relationship to God as your Father.

God as your Father provides identity, self-worth, and security.

Identity: if you are frustrated with who you are in your identity, look to Jesus to give you the right identity with God as your Father.

Self-worth: if you are hard on yourself. Neglect yourself. Ashamed of yourself. Don't like yourself. Look to Jesus to give you the right self-worth with God as your Father.

Security: if you are afraid. Fearful Anxious. Angry. Depressed. Look to Jesus to give you the right security with God as your Father.

If you are ready to surrender your life to Christ and grow close to God as his Father, I want to pray for you.

If you are stuck at the basecamp of Jesus and have missed out on the summit experience with God as your Father, I want to pray for you.

If you have been hurt by an earthly father and that has limited or prohibited a relationship with God as your Father, I want to pray for you.

If you are uncertain, confused or maybe even hesitant about how to know God as your Father, I want to pray for you.

It was as disappointing of a honeymoon as there ever could be. Max Lucado tells us in *When God Wisper's Your Name*. Let me paraphrase the story. The point can't be missed regardless of the length. The groom had secured a fabulous honeymoon sweet compete with chocolate. Picture window. And high hopes. That's not what he found when he arrived.

Seems the room was a little skimpy and plain. Certainly, not what he had in mind. Not what he paid for. And not worthy of a special occasion like a honeymoon. No flowers. Just a foldout sofa. And the lumpy mattress with sagging springs...I will leave the rest to your imagination.

The next morning the sore-necked groom marched down to the front desk and gave the manager a piece of mind that he could not do without. After listening patiently, the manager asked this simple question, "did you open the door in your room?" The groom admitted that he had not. He returned to the suite and opened the door he thought was closed with hangers, iron and ironing board.

Shocked. Surprised. And stunned, he saw a beautiful basket of flowers, chocolate and a spacious bedroom. Standing in the doorway of a room they missed; of a room they overlooked; of a room they never enjoyed - on the most significant night of their married lives. In many ways, so often Christ followers are like the honeymoon groom. Failing to discover what they should have enjoyed; what was paid for; what was expected.

They missed it. How sad. Cramped, plain and uncomfortable was the room they stayed in. Had they just opened the door they could have had a take-your-breath away experience that was already prepared, paid for and promising to deliver experiences to never be forgotten. Do

you see the illustration? Need I make my example any clearer? Christ follower after Christ follower needs to open the door to the next room. Why not try? Why not get curious with a relationship with God as your Father?

Take a look at scripture. Don't assume the door in the anti- quarters leads nowhere. Something inside of each of us longs for more. It is a Father Hunger longing to be satisfied.