

5 Ways to Grow Closer to Your 'Daddy' God

This morning as I was walking to my car in my driveway, I sensed that familiar voice speaking to me—the voice of my heavenly Father. The words triggered a big smile on my face. God said to me: “Lee, I get a big kick out of you!” For the next 10 minutes in my car, I praised Him for showing me, yet again, His overwhelming love.

I can already hear some people gnashing their religious teeth over this comment. “You just made that up!” “God does not talk like that!” “You’re delusional.” But I really don’t care what people say about it. I know my Father’s love, and His acceptance has transformed me. And I’m eager to grow more intimate with Him.

Many Christians struggle to truly know God as an affectionate, approachable and even playful Daddy. They read the Bible, listen to sermons and attend church, and they can quote Scriptures about God’s love. But for them, God’s love is a cold, clinical doctrine—not a warm experience. If you’d like to go deeper in intimacy with your Father in this new year, consider taking these steps:

1. Discover your identity as a child of God. Everybody’s talking about *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* these days. It’s interesting that the central plot of all *Star Wars* films is the mystery of paternity. In one of the original films we learned during a certain dramatic light saber duel that Darth Vader was the father of Luke Skywalker. In the new movie, we discover (spoiler alert!) that Han Solo is Kylo Ren’s dad—and we are left with a bigger question: Is Luke Rey’s father?

I’ve met a few people who don’t know who their father is. But I meet Christians all the time who doubt God loves them as a

father. The Bible tells us that when we are born again, the Holy Spirit enters our hearts to solve our own paternity mystery. Romans 8:15 says, "... You have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'" The Holy Spirit helps us understand who we belong to. And His name is "Abba"—the Hebrew word for "Daddy" or "Papa."

2. Throw out old religious mindsets. Are you uncomfortable calling God your "Daddy"? If you are, you really don't believe Romans 8:15. He is Abba! The problem is that many Christians have been conditioned by harsh sermons, rote prayers and somber organ music to believe God is (1) very distant, (2) always angry and (3) too busy managing heaven to take notice of us. That's how the legalistic Pharisees viewed God, but Jesus challenged their warped ideas. Throughout His life on earth, He showed us that God is approachable, accepting of all people, friendly toward sinners, forgiving, protective and affectionate. He even let the disciple John lay his head on His chest (John 13:29)—something a proper Pharisee would never do! Yet Jesus isn't the slightest bit religious. If you let Him, He will pull you close to His chest and let you hear the beating of His heart. He really wants you to be close!

3. Get healed from your own issues with your parents. When some people hear the word "father," the word conjures up painful memories of domestic abuse, abandonment, alcoholism or frightening punishments. Others associate "father" with a numb detachment—because they never connected emotionally with their dads. These are called "father wounds"—and there is a maternal version too. Don't let the mistakes of your imperfect parents keep you from enjoying God's perfect love. Talk to a pastor, mentor or counselor about your pain. Then let the Holy Spirit show you that your heavenly Daddy is strong, compassionate, accepting, gentle, kind and faithful.

4. Accept the forgiveness you've already been given. Some Christians can quote every Bible verse about God's forgiveness, yet what they believe in their heads has never

shifted to their hearts. Deep down they think God simply tolerates them. They know the blood of Jesus paid for their sins, but this seems more like a legal transaction ratified by a benevolent judge. They still believe God is silently mad at them, even though He canceled their guilty sentence. That is not the gospel!

God did not halfheartedly or reluctantly forgive you—He forgave you from His gushing heart of love. Yes it was a legal transaction, but it was enacted out of a wondrous compassion that will take all of eternity to comprehend. The Bible says God directed all His righteous anger toward Jesus and laid our punishment on Him—so that He could remove the barrier that separated us. All because of love! He is not angry at you now—He loves you so much He actually threw a party to welcome you into His presence! He doesn't just tolerate you; He delights in you!

5. Bring your hidden shame out of the closet. You can receive Christ's forgiveness the moment you confess your sins (1 John 1:9). But James 5:16 says you can go further: You can also confess your secret sins to another person "so that you may be healed." Many Christians have never taken this bold step because it's too embarrassing. But the more transparent you are with others, the freer you will be from your past. If the devil is constantly reminding you of your past sins, grab another Christian and pray together about these accusations. I guarantee your accuser will flee.

When you truly know you are accepted and embraced by the Father without reservation, you will sense His presence, feel His embrace and hear your Daddy's voice.