

Experiencing God as Your Father

Many people recoil at the idea of God as their Father, based upon their experience with their own father or authority figures. They blame Him for the ills of their lives. They see Him as a harsh judge with a whip in His hand and a cold, calculating heart. To their minds, He is an angry God who makes impossible demands and then casts people into hell for failing to keep them.

As a result, most people will do anything to get free from bondage, except pursue an intimate relationship with God the Father.

The apostle Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8, NIV). For us to be transformed, it is enough for us to experience the Father at deep and abiding levels – for it is from that relationship that all of the meaning of life flows. Consequently, we must pursue Him through worship and prayer – pouring out our love for Him and receiving into ourselves the confidence and assurance of His love for us.

“For this is eternal life,” Jesus said as He prayed to the Father, “that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV).

Jesus also said, “Anyone who has seen Me, has seen the Father” (John 14:9, NIV). Do you love Jesus? Then you know and love the Father as well. Jesus is the exact representation of the Father. He is the image of God (2 Cor. 4:4c), in whose face we see the glory of God (2 Cor. 4:6c).

The Heart of the Father

One night, as I meditated on the crucifixion, God the Father

revealed the crucifixion from His side of things. Without any warning, His heart swept into my heart and I could feel everything He felt as He watched His Son be crucified. It was a devastating revelation. The intensity of His emotion was overwhelming – the pain unbearable.

Imagine having to watch your son be tortured to death in front of your very eyes. Now imagine that you have all the power in heaven and earth to stop it – but you choose not to. That is what God the Father had to do, and that is the depths of agony He felt as He watched His Son die.

It is difficult to rebel against a Father who suffered so much for you – who loves you with such intensity.

A “Father” Story

I was deep in worship one night when I suddenly realized I was talking to the Father as though I was seven years old. I thought, “David, you’re going off the deep end here. You’d better bring yourself back into reality before someone catches you and sends you away.” Suddenly, the Lord said, “Don’t stop talking to Me as you have been. I am taking you back to the age when things started going wrong for you so that I can grow you up seamlessly from there. Remain seven for now so that I can heal you.”

It was amazing what He then began to do. He restarted my emotional growth from the point, at which it had shut down as a result of the traumas in my life. He wasn’t interested in patching up a broken vessel. He wanted to recreate a new vessel, and so He began fathering me from the age of seven.

Knowing exactly what the longings of my heart had been, He began to fulfill them for me. On one occasion, as I sat in His presence, He caused me to experience myself sitting in His lap while He stroked my hair – something that I had always longed for my father to do.

On another occasion, He gave me a vision in which I was playing catch with Him – again, a deep longing in my heart that had never been realized with my earthly father.

Each year, I would grow several years on the inside, both emotionally and spiritually, so that within just a few years, I was relating to God as a teenager and then finally as an adult.

In the healing process, we must grow through the stages of maturity – childhood, adolescence, adulthood and finally, parenthood. If in some sense we missed a healthy childhood, rather than being patched up, we must return to the point where our emotional growth stopped and allow the Father to grow us to maturity.

Getting Started in an Intimate Relationship with the Father

If the idea of developing an intimate relationship with an invisible God is a bit daunting for you, let me give you a few suggestions to get you started.

1. Focus primarily on God, His glory, grace and power. Sing, worship, pray and read His Word with the goal of knowing Him intimately.
2. Listen for Him to reveal hidden things to you.
3. Allow Him to relate to you at the age level where your spiritual and emotional growth stopped. Feel free to talk to Him as a little child would, if that is where you are in your relationship with Him.
4. Commit to challenging the old and developing new thought habits.
5. With the authority Christ has given you, challenge the spiritual forces that have participated in the bondage of lying emotions and feelings.

6. Specifically address the tyranny of being controlled by feelings rather than objective truth revealed in Scripture. Practice what I call “truth therapy” in the face of old emotions and beliefs.

7. Identify the major time-stealer in your life and cut it off, using that time to commune with God.

8. Talk to Him at every crossroad, upon making every decision, at the moment of every compulsive or negative thought or feeling. Confess your weakness. Admit your dependence. Ask Him for His power to defeat the enemy.

9. Find a group of devoted, balanced, healthy Christians and join their meetings (home fellowships, men’s or women’s groups, etc.).

10. Commit yourself to reading every day in the Bible until God speaks to you. Then meditate on that message, asking God to guide and empower the institution of the new truth into your life.

11. Be careful to center your actions in knowing Him, responding in love to Him out of His already demonstrated love for you on the cross. When you catch yourself going to God with the primary purpose of getting something, stop, reorient your priorities and approach Him again.

It’s amazing what God can do once we return to Him with the humbled heart of a prodigal son (Luke 15:21).

After getting saved from a profligate life, I began to seek the Father so that I could learn to love the One I had feared for so many years. Every night, I would kneel at my bed and pour my heart out to Him – telling Him what I was thinking, what I was feeling, what was tempting me, what I didn’t understand, asking Him to give me understanding of His Word and His ways, learning to see Him through the exact representation of His Being – Jesus Christ (Col. 1:15).

Ever so slowly, I began to love the Father and, eventually, even to trust Him. The turnaround came just as the Scripture said it would – God transformed my heart through His grace and love.

In truth, the Father is an awesome, perfect, unconditionally loving and forgiving Father – one who is perfect in all His ways, flawless in wisdom, one who completes and heals us. This is the true Father in heaven! This is my daddy. If I can trust no one else, I can trust Him completely (adapted from *The Sexual Healing Reference Edition*). {eo}

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