



Like the Father

Sooke Baptist Church
Sunday, June 18, 2023, 10am

I came across an article about the top things you won't hear a dad say.

- Can you turn up the music? It really calms my nerves.
- If you can't finish your peas, just throw them in the garbage.
- Here, you take the remote.
- Please, 'honey,' let me change that poopy diaper.
- You know what, let's both go and get face tattoos.

Being a father is a daunting task.

I remember the first time leaving the hospital with Barb and our firstborn, thinking, now what do we do?

I wanted to ask the nurses, isn't there some binder or workbook that can help me???

In Isaiah 49 God said:



Can a mother forget the baby
at her breast and have
no compassion on the child
she has borne?
Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you
on the palms of my hands;
your walls are ever before me.

Isaiah 49:15-16

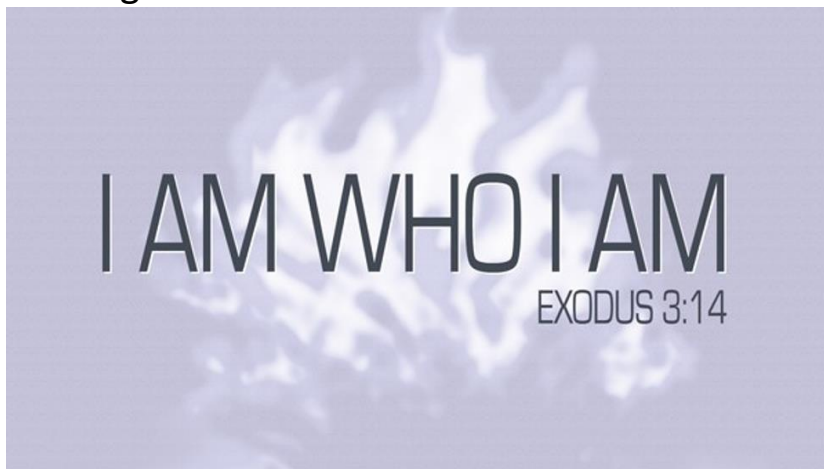
DailyVerses.net

This picture of a woman nursing an infant reveals an important and significant aspect of God's character – his tender love for those in relationship with him.

However, in spite of the fact that God wants us to see that his care for his people is like that of a mother with her baby, God doesn't reveal himself as a mother, but as a...father.

This is an amazing picture of God that you and I need to deeply and repeatedly reflect on.

In the OT Scripture God's covenant name was revealed to Moses at the burning bush.



God revealed himself as the One who is self-existent and sovereign. He is the One who is the reality behind all reality. He is the All-Powerful God; the Eternal One, the Creator God.

When Daniel saw God in a vision, he wrote this:

Daniel 7:9-10

As I looked thrones were set in place,
and the Ancient of Days took his seat.

His clothing was white as snow; the hair of his head was
white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire,
and its wheels were all ablaze.

A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him.

Thousands upon thousands attended him,
ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.

The court was seated, and the books were opened.

This scene is one of great majesty and authority and is awe-inspiring.

When Isaiah saw the LORD seated on a throne, high and exalted in all of his majesty and authority, he cried out, “Woe is me!”

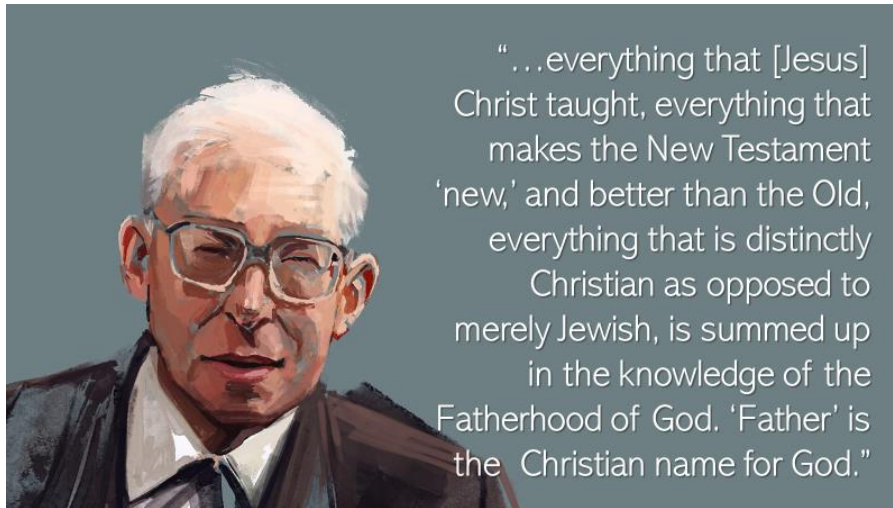
He did so because the triune God is completely Other than us.

But in the NT, Jesus repeatedly and intentionally revealed God as the Father.

When his disciples asked to be taught how to pray, is highly significant that Jesus didn't tell them to address God as “YAHWEH,” but as...



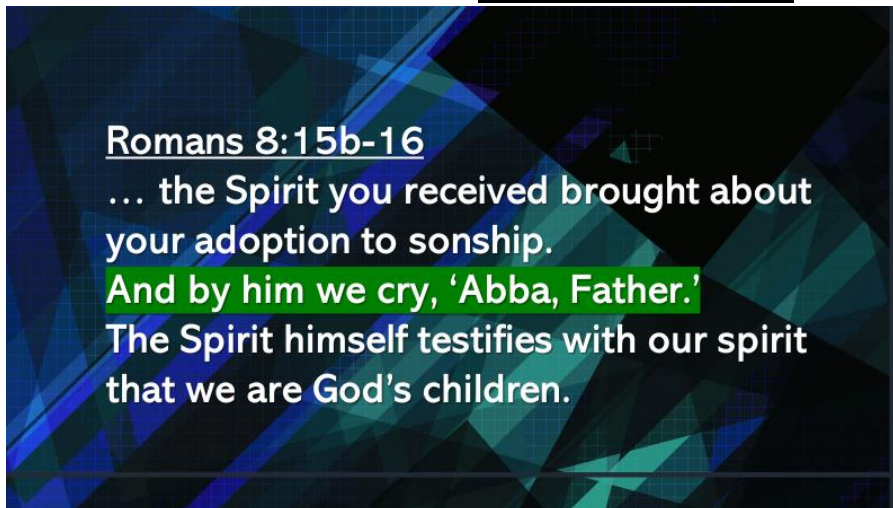
J.I. Packer wrote:



"...everything that [Jesus] Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament 'new,' and better than the Old, everything that is distinctly Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. 'Father' is the Christian name for God."

Knowing God, p.224.

Look at what Paul wrote in Romans 8:15b-16.



Romans 8:15b-16

... the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.

And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

"Abba" is an expression of endearment.

Our heavenly Father is our 'abba,' he is our dad.

With this as a foundation, I want us to consider two ways (and they are closely linked) as to how God... 'fathered' Jesus... and then to consider how this shapes and influences how we men are to father our children.

At Jesus' baptism, do you remember what happened when he came up out of the water?

When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Luke 3:21-22

ilyVerses.net

Jesus is about to be led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he was tempted by Satan for forty days.

There in the desert, doubts were whispered into Jesus' heart and mind by Satan.

Matthew 4:3, 5: *If you are the Son of God...*

Jesus resisted every temptation because he knew who he was... The Father had told him: "You are my Son"...

There was a second time when the Father audibly spoke to Jesus in the presence of others. Matthew 17:5.

While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Matthew 17:5

ilyVerses.net

This affirmation of the Father... happened when Jesus was in the final year of his public ministry.

As the pressure steadily mounted against Jesus, the Father's affirmation strengthened his resolve to finish what he had come to earth to accomplish.

Dads, there is great pressure that is coming against your children. There are many voices, some loud, some subtle... that would tell them that their identity and their worth as a person is rooted in... things other than this one glorious reality... they are image-bearers...



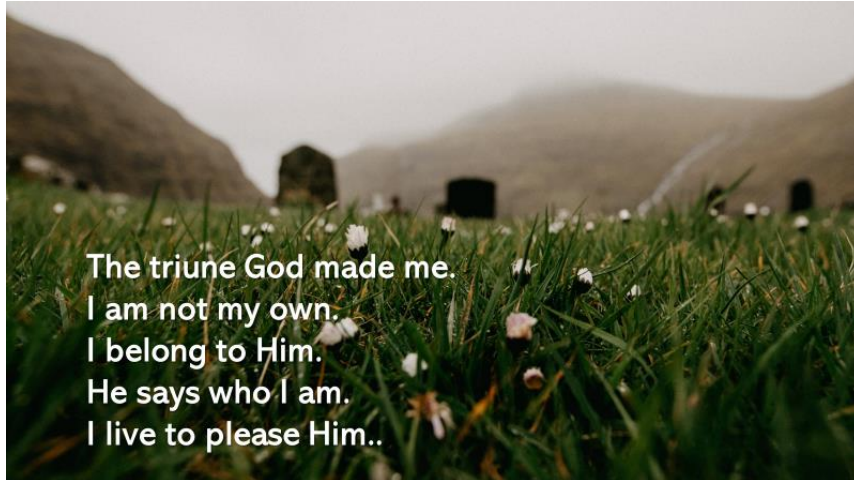
... created in the likeness of God.

He formed them in their mother's womb, as a boy or a girl. He placed them in the family of his choosing... and has a beautiful plan for their life.

The relationship that defined Jesus; the relationship that guided Jesus in all aspects of his life... in all of his decisions...on a daily basis... was his relationship with his Father.

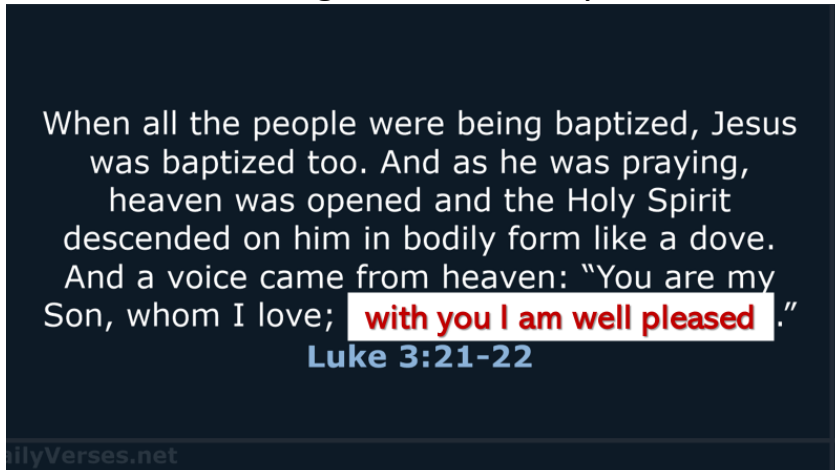
Men, it is God's intent that it would be the same for you and me. Our children need to hear from our mouths the truth of who they are – they are ours... and they are the Father's.

This needs to be the rock, the anchor, the fortress for their heart and mind:



Who we are has everything to do with whose we are.
We belong to God.

There is something else ... I need you to see.



Isn't that incredible!

You'd think that it would go without saying that Jesus knew the Father was proud of him.

But the Father was not willing to let his pleasure in Jesus be unspoken.

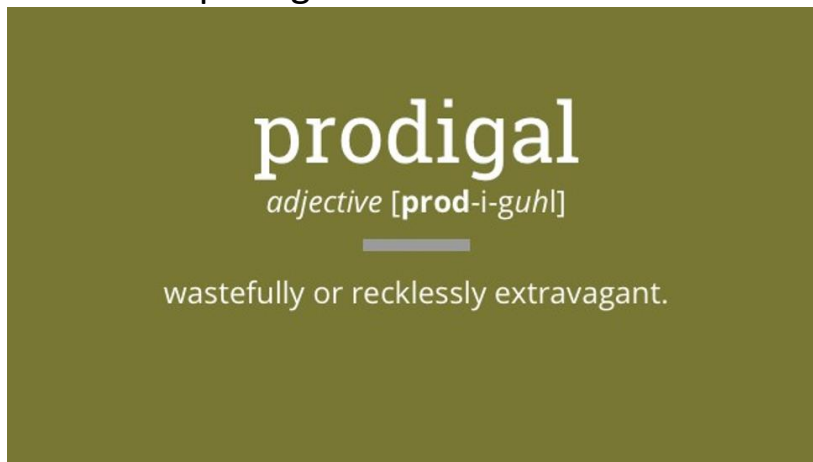
Men, our children, our teens and yes, even our adult children, need to hear us say to them that we are proud of them.

Our affirmation builds the right kind of confidence within the spirit of a child, when they are young, and still carries great weight when they are older.

If it was important for Jesus to hear his Father's affirmation and delight in who he was, and to be told that he was loved... then we know... it is important that our children hear from us how pleased we are with them and that we love them.

Our love for our children is to be the constant in their life... regardless of what they do or don't do.

Jesus once told a parable that illustrated how God the Father loves. The story is mistakenly called the prodigal son. The word "prodigal" means...



Many when hearing or reading this parable have focused on the wasteful, reckless, unrestrained lifestyle of the son who left home, and lost his inheritance to wild living.

But Jesus intended the emphasis of the parable to be... not on the actions of the son who left home, but on the father who welcomed the son back.

In Jesus' story it is the father who is the prodigal.

It's the father who is recklessly extravagant... even wasteful, in terms of his love for his son.



Tell the story.

This is the part of the story that is shocking...what the father said to the wayward son and to his household:

**“Quick!
Bring the best robe and put it on him.
Put a ring on his finger
and sandals on his feet.
Bring the fattened calf and kill it.
Let’s have a feast and celebrate.**

**For this son of mine was dead
and is alive again;
he was lost and is found.”**

The truth which Jesus revealed in this story is that God the Father is a prodigal God... who never stops loving us; never gives up on us; who watches and waits for us... to turn our hearts towards home...

And when we do...

... he runs to meet us...

... he wraps his arms around us...

... he kisses us...

... he celebrates our homecoming.

What is it that the Spirit would want you and I to put into practice?
Like God, our heavenly Father... we are to be prodigal dads.



...who never give up on their kid(s)....
... who wait for them, no matter how far they wander away...
... who never lose hope that they will come home...
...and when they do, runs to embrace them.



Fathers, our children need footsteps in which to follow.

As we think about fathering like God fathers, has the Spirit of God brought to your attention something he wants you to deal with, something that needs to change, something that is holding you back spiritually, something entangling you?

If God's Spirit is pressing you to make a particular response, will you say yes to him, right now?

- If something needs to be confessed as sin, will you confess it?
- If something new needs to begin, will you ask the Spirit for help to begin today?
- If a fresh commitment needs to be made, will you speak that commitment to your heavenly Father before you leave this room?

If we are to lead our children well, then we ourselves must be led by God's Spirit, if we are to father like our heavenly Father.

We can't take our children to a place we haven't been.
So we need to ask: where is it that we are leading our children?

Let me share with you this open letter written by a mom to her daughter.

Men, we father in tandem with our spouses.
And so, while this letter was written by a mom, it expresses the loving resolve and commitment of a husband and wife who follow Jesus and are investing their lives into their children that they would do the same.

Dear child of my heart,
Today you came to me sad, and I wanted to comfort you.
Your friends spoke of owning things you do not own, watching movies you do not watch, going to places you do not go, and wearing things you do not wear.

Even in the telling, they spoke in ways you do not speak.
You were feeling very sharply your "otherness" today.

But what comfort can I give you?
How can I pull the sharp thorn of comparison from your tender flesh?

Mothers don't like to see their children hurt.
My own heart wants to find the shortest path to remove your pain, a pain that spills over to me because I remember being 13.
And because I know you are being singled out for boundaries you did not set.

Should I comfort you by giving you the things that separate you from the well-provided, worldly-wise woman-girls at the lunch table?

Not everything you don't have right now is a "no" – some things are just a "not-yet."

So I might revisit what you're ready for, not because I want your friends to like you, but because I want to give to you right things at right times.

Your friends would have you believe that being different is an unbearable state, but I would have you believe otherwise.

Sweet child, study the way you are feeling today.

Because I love you, I ask this of you: lean into your "otherness" – learn the contours of its face, feel the steady grip of its hand.

Because I intend it to be your lifelong companion.

It is a truer friend than those who surround you now.

More than I want your comfort, I want you to be an alien and a stranger.

You are beginning to understand what that means – that not fitting, that dissonant chord, that unease in the midst of ease that has been the faithful travel companion of God's children for millennia.

And I rejoice in the faithfulness of the God who is showing you this truth.

Here is what you must come to see: what the lunch table calls your enemy, I call your friend.

"Otherness" is a sensation not to be dulled or diminished but to be cultivated and cherished.

So, though it goes against every mothering instinct, I will not pull the thorn from your flesh, not because I want to withhold comfort, but because there is no true comfort in a lie.

This world is not our home.

We are sojourners, travelers on our way to the only true comfort the human heart can know.

I will not help you populate your life with things that lessen your grip on this reality.

Because I love you, yes.

But because I love your heavenly Father above all else.

And I will give an account to him for whether I have raised citizens of earth or citizens of heaven.

I pray for you – do you not know how much?

I pray for you to be able to say with David that the boundary lines have fallen for you in pleasant places.

It is not a mindset that we reach with ease.

But it is the mindset of someone who has learned the safety and joy of “otherness.”

I am willing to give you the years you will need to learn this truth.

I am trusting the Father to show you the comfort of being called his own.

There is no real comfort besides this one.

I could not love you more.

Love, Mom

This is the destination which we are leading our children to.

Does this letter encourage you?

Does it challenge you?

Does it stir up godly resolves in you?

What would the Spirit have you put into practice?

And lastly, it may be that some of you are not yet in a relationship with Jesus.

But this morning you've realized you need to be... you want to be.

Don't just feel the pull of God's Spirit, and then leave here... somehow thinking that feeling a feeling is how a person begins to follow Jesus.

Welcome Jesus into your life.

How does one do that?

- You speak with God... acknowledging that he exists.
- You express to him you can't save yourself.
- You verbalize your belief in Jesus... that he took your place, dying the death you deserved, and rose from the dead in order that you might be given as a gift his goodness.
- You ask him to forgive your sin... for it was your sin that was placed on him by God the Father when he died on a Roman cross.
- You welcome him into your life to be in charge... which means, he calls the shots from now on.

This is a moment of decision.

God has revealed his heart to us in his word.

Now, it is our time to respond to him, in love, in faith and in obedience.

The Blessing

I want to speak a blessing over the fathers who are here this morning. But before I do that I want to urge you one more time – to respond to God as God’s Spirit has been urging you to respond.

If you need someone to listen to you; someone to pray with you; or to help you pray; as we wrap up our time here, I will remain at the front, in order to be available to speak and to pray with you.

Blessing

Ephesians 6:4

**Father’s, do not exasperate your children,
instead lead them in the way of the Master.**

Colossians 3:21

**Father’s, do not embitter your children,
or they will become discouraged.**

To exasperate and to embitter is the same word in the original language the NT was written in.

Fathers we are not to spiritually influence our children by compulsion or through irritation – to do so, only exasperates, embitters and discourages them.

Fathers may you be blessed with wisdom from God to know the heart of your child.

May the words you speak to your children be life giving.

May the life of God in you be so real and compelling that your children are eager to follow Jesus like you do.

