

Our Father God

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This has been called “the fatherless generation.” Millions of children around the world are growing up in a fatherless home. Divorce, AIDS and war have stripped the homes of fathers.

Many other children experience neglect and even abuse from their fathers. Careers and addictions have usurped the place the child should have had. There is competition for the father’s time and often the child is the loser.

Malachi the prophet, in the last book of the Old Testament, predicted a shift and said that one day God would “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” We look forward, with anticipation, to that day.

The Bible presents God as the ultimate Father. For those who had an abusive earthly father, this seems an unlikely way to present God. For them, this concept is troubling and confusing.

Even those of us who had good fathers, sometimes wrestle with this concept. I was raised in the church and had the mistaken idea that God was a stern judge with an impossible set of rules. I actually thought that He hoped that I would break one of them, so that He could chastise me.

My father was often a contradiction. On some days he was kind and generous. On other days he was harsh and demanding. I was never certain how he would be on any given day. And unconsciously I began to think of God in those terms.

But, thankfully, over the years, through reading the scriptures and living life, I have come to know that God is my heavenly Father and that He cares for me. And I have found that He is consistently good and does not change from one day to the next. God is not capricious.

Moses described God as Father. In his final reflective and prophetic song he declared, "Is He not your Father who brought you out." (Deuteronomy 32:6) He is musing on God's care of them over forty years.

The Psalmist wrote that God is, "a Father of the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5) He said, "as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him, for He knows our name, He remembers that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13-14) God is patient and kind and understanding.

Isaiah the prophet addressed a nation that had turned from God, and acknowledged, "but now, O Lord, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; we are the work of Your hand." (Isaiah 64:8)

When Hosea, the broken hearted prophet, pled with the nation to return to God, he graphically used the picture of an earthly father.

"When Israel was a child I loved him..."

"I taught him to walk..."

"I healed them ..."

"I stooped and fed them ..." (Hosea 11:1-4)

What a beautiful and tender picture of God. He loved them and chose them. He helped them take their first steps and picked them up when they fell. When they hurt themselves He bandaged them and healed them. He stooped, like a strong man to a child to feed them and care for their needs.

And what He did for them He is ready to do for us. He is the God who never changes.

Jesus repeatedly referred to God as Father. He taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven." (Luke 11:2) He said, "if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." (Luke 11:13)

He told the story of the prodigal son to illustrate the Father's love. Even after the son left and squandered the father's money, he still loved him and longed for his return. And when he came, dirty and impoverished the father's arms were open. He found forgiveness and restoration.

The Father's arms are open to all. Jesus said, "all that come to me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37)

Jesus gave this promise, "but as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe on His name." (John 1:12)