



## *Knowing the Father*

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## **A Desire and A Promise**

What did God want his family to be like? Ephesians 1:4 Before the creation of the world he intended that we should receive the full rights of sonship.

### **Made for His pleasure**

Col 1:16 All things were created by Him **and for** Him. He created us for himself.

Rev 4:11 (NLT) The emphasis in this translation is being created because he wanted to.

Is 43:1-7 We were created for His glory. He formed us, we are His!

St Augustine: "You have made us for yourself O Lord, our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you".

God wanted a family. He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden and His desire is to walk with us too. He enjoyed their company and wants to enjoy friendship with us as well!

### **Made in the image of His son**

Rom 8:28-29 We are predestined to the likeness of His son. Not only are we made in Jesus' likeness but we can also share his inheritance and the intimate relationship he has with the Father.

2 Cor 3:18 Being transformed into His likeness.

### **Enjoy the unity of the Trinity**

The love within the Trinity is complete. Nothing is missing. This love and unity was meant to be shared with us! John 17:24 and also so we would know that we are with loved just as Jesus is loved, John 17:23 & 26.

### **The Father's Plan**

Deut 32:5-6 Is he not your Father?

Psalm 68:5 Father to the fatherless

Isaiah 1:2 "Children have I brought up"

Malachi 4:5-6 Turn the hearts of the fathers to their children (and vice versa)

### **The Father's Desire**

Jeremiah 3:19 "I myself said, "How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance\* of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me.

Desire to affirm: who we are, our belonging to him and our inheritance.

### **True Fathering is active and ongoing**

Fathering is not a single act but an ongoing, lifelong process. We walk with our children and teach them about life. We help them when they are stuck, we offer advice and encouragement - we don't leave them to their own devices.

So it is with God! He wants to be a father to us in an active and ongoing way, on a day to day basis. We are not left to muddle on in our own strength. He calls us into the shelter of His wings to protect us, care for us, nurture us and lead us in His ways.

### **The Father's cry satisfied by a promise**

I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. (2 Cor 6:18)

I will be a Father **to YOU** - **Two words** will change your life if you let them!

This is the basic, simple gospel.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!  
And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. (1  
John 3:1)

GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN FATHER AND HE WANTS TO BE A FATHER TO YOU

## Opening Our Heart to Love

### **A Heart to See**

Eph 1:15-18

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

We see beyond what God does to see who he is! Eyes of heart opened so we know who we are.

### **A Heart to Receive**

Romans 5:5 And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

Romans 10:10 with your heart you believe and are saved.

Love is a substance which poured into our heart through HS, it really exists. There is something greater for us than simply loving God, and that's being loved by Him. We are not called to be initiators but responders/receivers. Little children are love sponges, they receive.

The heart is central to everything. Yet some parts of heart may be closed – like a room with a locked door. Heart is sensitive and easily wounded so we close it to protect it. Fear of more pain or wounding.

Heart is central. Major blockages are unforgiveness and recovering heart of sonship. Not flicking a switch to make him love us – he already does, right now. Always loved you. It is about clearing out the stuff to become a container for him and his love. Eph 4:17-19 futility of minds leads to: darkened understanding, cut off from the source of life, callous and impure.

John 4:14 Jesus offers living water to satisfy the depth of our heart. Not necessarily about the externals of our live but our heart.

### **A Heart to Protect**

In wilderness Satan attacked Jesus' heart. First two temptations "if you are the son of God", the third – worship me, not your Father.

Can easily arrive at the wrong conclusion – Jer 17:9 deceitful, Ezekiel 11:19 stone, Matt 12:34 out of the heart mouth speaks. Not good news but not the whole story. There is hope for our heart to change. A transformation is needed and it is possible.

King David knew this.

Psalms 86:11 David wanted an undivided heart.

Psalms 51:10-12 "Create in me a clean heart, O God

What had David gone through? The rejection: Samuel anointing one of Jesse's sons, by brothers before he fought Goliath, Psalm 27 father and mother forsake me. Yet he had heart of a son – towards Jesse and Saul: went home to feed sheep, played for demented king, did not kill Saul when he could. Adopted into Saul's family, recognises Saul's care and compassion.

## **A Heart to Open**

Takes a step of faith to open heart. Father is complete and perfect of expression of love. He draws us into love, to receive love we need an open heart.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 When we search/desire with all our heart we will find him and discover his ways. Faith is seeking.

That's why Solomon writes for us to guard our hearts, Prov 4:20-27 - some pointers on how to guard our heart!

When our hearts are touched we start to live differently. Luke 5:33-39 don't take a new garment and rip a bit out to patch an old garment. The Father's love is not a patch it is totally different and new. We are to be clothed in love, Col 3:12-14. New wine and wine skin – the wine is his love, need a new container which will expand as it receives more and more. Our heart is that container.

Romans 5:5

Job 42:5 "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you."

For Job, this changed everything. It was not knowing about but a heart knowing, a life-giving/changing relationship. When we see with our heart everything **will** change.

Seeing with the eyes of the heart is seeing who the Father is, rather than what he does.

## Forgiveness From The Heart

Psalm 130:3-4 (NIV)

"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are to be feared" (Lord, if You measured us and marked us with our sins, who would ever have their prayers answered? But Your forgiving love is what makes you so wonderful! No wonder you are loved and worshipped! – TPT)

The act of forgiveness is powerful, it sets people free and releases them.

The Message says: "Forgiveness is your habit, that's why you're worshipped".

### Forgiveness brings redemption

Psalm 130:7 God's forgiveness brings full redemption. Generous redemption (*an overflowing supply of salvation – NLT*). True forgiveness comes from a heart of love to release and no longer hold someone in bondage. True forgiveness comes out of love.

When we forgive we will also see full redemption; we, too find freedom.

*Martin Luther*

*"I have difficulty praying the Lord's Prayer because whenever I say 'Our Father', I think of my own father who was hard, unyielding and relentless. I cannot help but think of God in that way".*

### Forgiveness from the heart

Matthew 18:21-35 NIV

Jesus' response to Peter's question - how often should I forgive? Forgiveness is endless, Jesus takes it to a different dimension.

This story is told in response to Peter's question, therefore the King's response is the one Jesus expects from Peter and therefore from us as well. We are going to declare that guilty people no longer owe us anything!

The King has had something taken from him and there was no way it could ever be repaid. It was an impossible task even for the servant to think about repaying the debt.

Firstly, before the king could cancel the debt he had to know how much had been taken, he counted the cost and then wrote it off. He could only cancel it once he knew what it was costing him.

In the same way, we have to know what has been taken (stolen) from us. We can only forgive when we see what has been lost. We have to count the cost of what has been stolen and also count the cost of what is **being** stolen. Not only the past but the present as well.

Secondly, the King could only forgive out of pity and sorrow for the servant – can we be the same. Pity = compassion. Forgiving like this brings freedom and "full redemption".

Thirdly, the King had to cancel the debt - no chance of repayment, let it go, no control or manipulation. That debt no longer belongs to you, it is written out of your ledger, no longer exists. (If something comes back in the future then that is a complete bonus.) We may never get back what was stolen. The other person had/has no capacity to be what we need them to be. Unforgiveness is the same as demanding repayment, whereas forgiveness is cancelling the debt, paying the price to let them off the debt.

At the end of the story Jesus talks about forgiving from the heart. When we forgive from the heart it is complete and allows our hearts to enter a greater level of freedom.

The King had pity or compassion on the servant – why? **He wanted him to be free** – do we want those who have wronged us to be free? Forgiveness from the heart is so powerful that when we cancel the debt we have a longing for the other person to be totally free. We don't want them to feel bad, feel guilty, feel they owe us anything – it's that strong in our hearts.

The main point of the first part has been what forgiveness from the heart looks like.

The second part of the story the main point is what happens to us if we do not forgive from our hearts. When the servant who had his debt cancelled by the king met another servant who owed him a much smaller amount, unlike his master he did not have compassion instead he wanted full repayment and so he remained a prisoner. He held onto his throat so was unable to go to the Father.

If we do not let go of those who have sinned against us we are waiting for a repayment that probably will not come.

To forgive from the heart we need to count the cost - what did that event take/steal from us. What has been the effect on us?

Heart forgiveness is much more than forgiving the event/person. Forgiving the event is like we excuse the other person for what they have done. Heart forgiveness goes into our heart and looks at the effect of that event on our life and what we have lost that we may never recover. Simply forgiving the event leaves the hook in our heart and we feel we are owed something.

Counting cost is recognising the bit of our heart that has been ripped out of us. And we may never get it back (even if it is our right).

Left with three questions:

Can I let these things go?

Do I want to let these things go?

It may not be fair, things may be our right but are prepared to trust Father?

Jesus is quite forceful about forgiveness, because relationship is so important.

## Living in Sonship

Ephesians 1:4 Before the creation of the world we were predestined to receive the full rights of sons.

### **Sonship is central to Jesus' ministry:**

Mat 3:16-17 The Father's affirmation of Jesus when he was baptised.

Mat 4:3 Satan's attack on Jesus in the wilderness.

Mat 17:1-5 The Father's affirmation on the Mount of Transfiguration.

John 19:7 The leaders' claim against Jesus.

John 3:35 Jesus was secure in who he knew he was!

Even the 12 year old boy in the temple, he had the heart of a son. Luke 2:48-51

### **Attracted to Life**

John 7:37-38 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."

Not a collection of facts, nor about information. It is drinking life. Relationship and intimacy. Not what we do but who we are. We have the spirit within us that cries out "Abba Father".

Magnet: Orphans repel, sons are attracted to the Father. Not an Employer/Employee or Master/Servant relationship. Son knows that he has a place in the family forever – not like a slave. John 8:34-36. Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

### **Sonship is knowing the Father**

Mat 11:27-30 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. Therefore "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus shows us how to know the Father. It is intimacy, not information. Anointing comes out of relationship not activity. It is His action rather than ours. A life of rest from a childlike heart.

John 14:10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. - sonship and intimacy go together.

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17)

### **The Holy Spirit of Sonship**

The Holy Spirit is God's own spirit, the very core of his being and he has taken of his spirit and put that same spirit in our spirit. He has put his life in us. He has put his character in us. He has made us like him - in his image!

Jesus promises us that the empty orphan heart will be filled up with love through the Holy Spirit and we will no longer be orphans but have the heart of sonship.



Romans 8:12-17 The “Abba” cry as we are filled with the spirit of sonship.

Holy Spirit has become a **bridge between the heart of the Father and our hearts**. Elastic, connecting and merging.

When this happens we will know we have direct access to God, because the Father himself loves us.

**Do you live as a son or a daughter?**

Often, we struggle to have the heart of a son/daughter. We don't feel we have that connection with our Heavenly Father as we recognise the orphan hearted ways in us. One of our greatest blockages is that we view God through the lens of our earthly parents and often that lens is dirty, so our vision is distorted. The pain we've experienced makes our lens dirty.

To know God as Father we need to clean the lens. If our heart is closed to our earthly parents (and we may justify it because of what they've done or how they treated us) then we have chosen independence and that is translated into our walk with Father. If we build walls between us and our parents, we build a wall between us and God. As we put our heart right with our parents so we see the Father more clearly.

How do we clean the lens?

Two aspects - what have they done that we need to forgive them for, second what was our response, have we closed our hearts to them (and maybe to ask them to forgive us for closing our heart). We cannot have the heart of sonship if we continue to hold them by the throat (Mat 18). Just as we want mercy for ourselves so we want to see mercy for them too.

Some of you may need to do something about this. Writing a letter, a phone call or a visit can be helpful. We don't lay blame or accuse but ask their forgiveness for having a closed heart.

This is the fruit of our sonship.

## The Father's Comfort

Love has many expressions. Comfort is one expression which goes to the core of our deep pain. We need it, but we don't talk about it!

**Comfort (dictionary):** *to bring relief from pain, distress or affliction, to satisfy, to strengthen within. To provide a sense of well-being. Quiet enjoyment.*

### Comfortless:

A tragedy. Left in the state of brokenness and despair. Despair is hopeless. Ecclesiastes 4:1-3 (NLT)

### Trauma and Loss

We all suffer loss (traumatic). When we are emotionally empty we need comfort. When we are in shock we need comfort. Aloneness, abandoned, pain, sick, wounded, broken, bereaved, rejection – we need to experience comfort that surpasses and goes beyond the pain or wound we have experienced. Every trauma or loss however big or small has to be met with a greater level of comfort. To bring healing and wholeness, the comfort we need has to be greater than the source of pain. Otherwise we are left in pain or left in discomfort.

Loss is not only the things that are taken from us, it's also the things we've longed for (desires, dreams, longings) that we've never received.

Like a container – take out all trauma and fill with comfort and love. Leave trauma in bottom – the comfort floats on top of trauma, always that undergirding of pain/discomfort, niggles or eats away.

Psalm 119:76: "May your unfailing love be my comfort, according to your promise to your servant." Love always comforts.

### Mourning

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." (Matthew 5:4)

Whenever we suffer trauma or loss (however great or small – it's still loss) we are bombarded by grief: shock, denial, pain, anger, guilt, despair, loneliness. That's ok, it's normal. It ought to be expected but too often we try and pretend it's not happening. Mourning is the process of walking through the grief and the related emotions. We must allow ourselves to mourn, please don't bury your grief. It's through our mourning that we are comforted.

### Comfort

When love does not comfort we seek comfort in other areas. Relationships, sex, pornography, shopping, possessions, alcohol, anything really. They are false comforts and their comfort will not last, they're like medicine – we have to keep taking it!

Only love provides true comfort and it's comfort that heals the deeply wounded parts of our heart. Comfort brings our heart home.

### Comfort Brings us Home

Isaiah 51:3 The Lord will surely comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will make her deserts like Eden, her wastelands like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the sound of singing.

Isaiah 51:11 Those the LORD has rescued will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. "I, even I, am he who comforts you.

Comfort transforms barrenness and brings joy and gladness. Thanksgiving instead of sorrow. When we are comforted our heart comes home.

### **Father of ALL Comfort**

We need to be comforted.

John 14:16 Jesus promised another Comforter/Helper to be with us forever. Implies Jesus was one. Verse 18 – not left as orphans, or comfortless. Comforter there to help us and guide us (v26). Not left alone.

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

What had Paul been through that enabled him to write this? God of ALL comfort, comforts us when we are afflicted. Everything we need to bring relief from trauma and pain comes from the Father.

Experience comfort through sufferings. Yes, we suffer. The suffering is not necessarily taken away but God's divine answer is we receive comfort from him. A deep expression of love.

Comfort (like love) overflows – as we are comforted so we can comfort others. If we have not truly been comforted ourselves maybe all we can give is sympathy (feeling of sorrow) or empathy (understand and share the feelings).

Titus comes to Paul 2 Cor 7:5-7. Paul was comforted not only by the visit of Titus but also by the comfort from the Corinthians which came through Titus.

We all need to be comforted.

The trauma and loss you've experienced (however long ago) – have you allowed yourself to mourn that trauma or loss, or is it buried.

How much? How long? As much and as long as it takes – you know when you've been comforted.

Can you open your heart to receive the Father's comfort and let your heart come home?

## Carried By Our Father

We want to be wise or strong. We know we're not, so we pretend (in reality not many are wise or strong). Conditioned to believe that strength and independence are good, that weakness is bad. We live in unreality.

1 Cor 1:26-29

God is not looking for the wise or strong or those that have power. He sees through the pretence.

The weak and the foolish show a dependency on the Father, not us but him. Weakness and humility.

### **His strength through our weakness**

Isaiah 40:28-3

Our weakness, or the recognition of it, leads to renewal and dependency on him. It's his greatness and power that lifts us up. His strength empowers us. Wait for him.

The world says: strength is good, weakness is bad. Leads to the path of self-righteousness.

"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." (2 Cor 11:30 NIV)

2 Cor 12:7-10

Paul describes his thorn in the flesh as a messenger from Satan, something meant to be destructive or a distraction, meant to steal life. Paul turned it round, he embraced it so it could become a force for good. It allowed him to recognise and embrace his own weakness, to be content with it. In order that God could be seen in him: his life, his heart journey and through him.

What do we do with our thorn? Do we fight it, want to be free of it (yes, of course) or do we turn it round so that the power of God can be seen in and through us. If we can embrace it as our weakness it takes the focus off us and our ministry, our own strength and productivity and allows us to rest in him. He becomes our resting place.

### **Carried by my Father**

We all want to do things for God, used by him. We start to think He needs us. We think of all the things we can do for Him, to help Him along. We end up worn out.

It is actually very different! Not dependent on us but totally dependent on Him.

"I will bless what you do.....BUT it will be limited.... to what you can do!"

### **As a father carries his son**

To a rebellious people – what does God say? Deut. 1:29-31 *Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."*

Do not be afraid, He has gone before you, He will fight for you, in Egypt and the desert, carries you, ALL the way. God carries us a father carries a son, even through the desert. This is the heart of the Father.

At the end of Moses' life, he is blessing the people and he reminds them again of the nature of the Father. Deut. 33:26-27 *There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

Underneath are the everlasting arms. We think we do it all yet He is there carrying us.

Does not just take the burdens – He is more interested in carrying you.

***As a shepherd carries a lamb***

Isaiah 40:10-11 How He really cares for us. God is not distant, nor angry, He does not judge, He does not hold our sin against us, He has redeemed us (bought us back). Shows us the true nature of love – comfort, the role of HS.

A big God, powerful etc yet we are close to His heart, tenderness, caring for a lamb.

***A child can be carried***

A God, a Father, who reaches down and picks us up and carries us. All these passages – demonstrate the sort of love a mother would have – that is part of God's nature – His care, compassion and nurture.

Jesus showed us something very important: Matthew 18:1-4

CHANGE, HUMBLE OURSELVES, BECOME AS A CHILD.

He is more interested in **YOU**, in your time, in intimacy – than He ever is with our activity. Sadly we think that our activity wins His heart!

***In allowing ourselves to be carried we recognise our own weakness.*** That we really can do nothing on our own but we need to rely and depend totally on our Father. As we acknowledge our weakness we recognise his strength. This is what Jesus modelled - total dependency on the Father.

Do we want our own strength or his power? Our weakness becomes the key to Sonship, because his strength and power are then released through us. This is the key to a life of rest.

## Walking As Jesus Walked

1 John 3:1

We can live in love  
Sonship is not a duty or obligation.

Not facts or principles (they give us good behaviour, not a changed heart).

We can't be a loving people until we've first become a loved people. Living in love is not trying to be a loving person, it's receiving love and giving it away.

It really is possible for us to live in love.

1 John 2:6 Walk as Jesus walked

1 John 2:3-5 Not a new law

1 John 1:1-4 A relationship, an experience.

### **Aware of own failings and weakness**

Exodus 33:12-15 Moses journey and heart transformation, three stages of our heart transformation.

Cry of human despair: "who is coming with me". We recognise our need and desperation. Default to the reasoning of the mind: "teach me your ways", "what must I do to find favour with you".

Revelation of who God is "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest"

Lamentations – looks like our own days, a bad day. We too can feel overwhelmed by life and its circumstances (finance, health, pain etc). We doubt his love or his presence – Ch 3:1-18 the story of our lives, v18 the low point, hopelessness "*so I say, My endurance has perished; so has my hope from the Lord.*" In Lam 3:21-23 he remembers something. The steadfast love of the Lord, his mercies new every morning. Even in the midst of pain God will not let us go. Hope. (Faith draws what we hope for into the present).

That place of weakness or failing can draw us back into love rather than cause us to run away. Godly sorrow produces repentance.

### **The place of love**

Are constantly drawn back to the place of love. So we can wait for the time of redemption. A comforted heart rekindles our hope.

1 John 4:16 *And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.*

Experiential words – know and rely.

We have direct access to the Father – John 16:23 & 26. Because the "*Father himself loves you*" (John 16:27)

## **Loved as Jesus is loved**

John 17:26 – Jesus prays for us

*“I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”*

Do we trust who God is to us? Not just who he is?

Opposite of love is fear, it has to go as we live in love. (1 John 4:16-19)

## **Loving one another**

As we are planted in love our hearts are transformed and we begin to express our sonship in our everyday lives - these two things work in tandem.

As we love him so we love one another. 1 John 4:12 *“No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us, if we love one another then his love is perfected in us.”* Not conditional of us loving others, but the overflow of love from within us. Do not seek love in order to give it away, but receive for the sake of receiving and then it can't help but overflow. The **fulfilment** or completion of being loved is that it overflows.

1 John 4:16-17 the overflow of love is the fruition, completion, perfection of us being loved.

We cannot live in love towards other people unless we have learned to live in love for ourselves.

Love keeps no record of wrongs (1 Cor 13:5)

Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8)

Love bears all things (1 Cor 13:7)

Make Love your greatest aim/goal (1 Cor 14:1)

## **Living in love**

*“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”* (Ephesians 3:16-18 NIV)

This is the transformed life Jesus offered to the people he met. An encounter with Jesus changes lives and just as he changed the life of many people in the gospels so he longs to change our lives too. As we come to Jesus and experience the relationship with Father which he has unveiled, then we too will be changed.

It is an exciting journey we have begun. We are his sons and daughters and it never ceases to amaze me that Father has chosen to make his home in my heart.