

New
New Family - April 19, 2015

April 25th, 2005... that's the day my life changed... because that's the day I became a dad. We went to the doctor's office in the morning and discovered Summer was already in the labor process so they sent us straight over to the hospital. Umpteen hours, pain, groans, yells, difficulties, and *one "Get this baby out of me!!!"* later... and here comes Jeremiah... my first born... my son.

And my life changed... instantly.

See, I was raised in a very loving family, with two awesome parents...

I grew up loved.

When I was made NEW by faith in **1994** I saw a new facet of God's love towards me.

When I got married to Summer in **2001** I discovered the love Jesus has for His church.

But on April 25th, **2005**, **as soon as I saw my son Jeremiah I understood how God sees ME.** I got a glimpse into the parenting heart of God. As soon as I saw that little boy, I remember thinking *"I would jump in front of a bus & trade my life for his in an instant. I would do whatever it took to provide for him & take care of him."* There was a deep swelling of love that rose up from within me that I didn't know was there 10 minutes before.

Any other parents ever experience that????

This is why it's such a big deal when the disciples come to Jesus & ask Him to teach them **how they should pray** & He opens up His mouth & says...

Matthew 6:9 NIV

This, then, is how you should pray: Our FATHER in heaven...

Jesus could have said, "Our GENERAL in Heaven", "Our WARRIOR in Heaven"... "Our GOD"... "Our MASTER"... "Our CREATOR."

But out of all the names available... Jesus chooses **ABBA**, which most closely translates to **DADDY.**

If God is first your MASTER then that's how you'll approach Him. If He's first your CREATOR you'll approach Him that way. But if He's your **DADDY**... that changes everything.

Pretty much **every little boy** who has a good dad wants to grow up to be exactly like their dad.

Pretty much **every little girl** who has a good dad wants to grow up to marry someone exactly like their dad.

On Friday I asked Isaac, my 6 year old, what he wanted to be when he grew up... he said, *"I want to be a preacher & a dad."* Melts your heart! I asked him, *"Isaac, what does a preacher do?"* He just stared at me... *"I don't know."* BUT HE WANTS TO DO IT ANYWAY! Because his dad does it!

Why do you think the weight of Hell is being thrown at destroying the fathers of our generation? Because our enemy knows that the way we see our biological father rubs off on how we see our Heavenly Father (*examples*).

In a recent survey, **20-somethings** were asked what God was like... and they replied that He was distant, wanted them to be good, & would help out if He could... **just like their biological father** - *he's not around, but he wants me to be good, & he'll drop a check in the mail if he's able.*

Whether you realize it or not, your dad had a direct impact on your view of God.

In fact, **PAUSE... what are the first two words that come to your mind when you think of YOUR FATHER?** We probably couldn't say some of those words in church! But I would be surprised if those two words don't also resemble how you see God the Father.

The person with the most potential for good in your life is your father.

He has more power than anyone else to influence you for GOOD or for EVIL.

And for the first time in America, **the majority of children born to women under 30 are now born outside of marriage.**

21% of white children, 31% of Latino children, & 58% of black children are living without their biological fathers in their lives.

And we can't pretend like this doesn't matter. The world tries to tell you that you don't need a father. That's a lie.

Children w/o a father are...

- 32 times more likely to run away.
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders.
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school.
- 10 times more likely to abuse drugs.
- 20 times more likely to end up in prison.

Most of the problems we are facing as a society are due to the fact that we don't have dads who are devoted to their wives & children. Or maybe you had a father in the house, but he was **detached**... or maybe he was **abusive**.

We all had a father but very few of us have been FATHERED.

AND the GOOD NEWS is this is where God steps in... He's a father to the fatherless. So don't lose hope if you're a **single parent** or if you had a **poor father**.

The father wound is DEEP. But TODAY, your Good Father wants to break off any bad or broken ideas about who He is & be a GOOD GOOD FATHER to you

We're in our 3rd week of a series called NEW, talking about the NEW life we have in Jesus. And the truth is that we have a habit of talking a lot about **WHAT we are supposed to DO** but don't talk very much about **WHO we ARE.**

And what we're talking about **TODAY is my favorite part of who we are.** If someone was to ask me what my favorite part of being a Christian was, I would talk to them about what we're talking about today.

Here's the great Truth we're landing on today...

1 John 3:1 NIV

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

The best news you're going to hear all day is this...

Through Jesus we have a new family with a new Father.

Because of Jesus' work on the cross, **He stood in my place & received my punishment so I could stand in His place & receive His privilege. The Father gave His Son so He could call me son & I could call Him Father.**

Through Jesus, we have a new family with a new Father! A Good Father!

So let's talk about that... what changed with our new life & then we're going to land on something that I believe is going to be really meaningful to a lot of us.

What's changed in the New Life?

FAMILY

Through Jesus we find out that *Spirit is thicker than Blood.*

Matthew 12:48-50 NIV

"Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" Pointing to his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

And Jesus redefines family.

Maybe you had a broken family growing up, BUT through faith in Jesus now you are a part of God's family!

Jesus teaches us to pray, **OUR Father in Heaven...** OUR tells us that we aren't alone. People like to throw around this idea that we are ALL God's children. That's simply not true. In fact, **Jesus is really clear that most people are children of the devil.** BUT the **CHURCH** is the family of God through **faith** in Jesus.

And we have a big family meeting here every Sunday & we get to know each other better at the café after service & we meet around dinner tables throughout the week in small groups.

Maybe you've been to a **small group** before & you thought, **"Man, those people drove me crazy!"** Welcome to the family! Because that's what family does!... we drive each other crazy! Believe me, they were thinking the same thing about you!

In this family, those who have been saved for a long time are like the big brothers & big sisters. The ones who have been saved for a short time are like little brothers & little sisters.

And we love each other. That's what family does.

That's why church isn't just a podcast... or watching a video online... it's loving & knowing each other.

Our birth-5th grade family is growing together as we speak next door. Our middle school family meets downstairs during the 11am service downstairs. Our high school family meets here on Wednesday nights.

And **we want our family to continue to grow!** B/C if the Son wants to continue saving people & the Father wants to continue adopting people, we want to partner with Him in that mission.

What else has changed in the New Life?

IDENTITY

If you didn't have a good biological father, sometimes it feels like something is missing. Because one of the primary roles of our biological father is to help us find our IDENTITY.

And fatherlessness in our society has resulted in a whole generation that doesn't know who they are – don't know how to be a man or a woman – lacking confidence – struggling with identity & homosexuality.

Personally, I've never met someone who was in **the homosexual lifestyle that didn't have real issues with their father** or abuse by a father figure. I've met plenty who denied they had any father issues, but after spending an hour with them you can see there was a whole lot of dysfunction at home.

See, **my body will change from childhood to adulthood... But I have to be TAUGHT what it looks like to move from a boy to a man.** Because the world says, **"Have a sexual conquest & THEN you'll be a man"** but it doesn't work.

And because of fatherlessness, *many of us are KIDS trapped in ADULT bodies.* **Some of us are 50 in our skin but 15 in our soul.** Because we never had a dad look in our eyes & say, **"Today you're a man. Today you're a woman. I'm proud of you. I love you."** What sort of difference would that have made????

But when you're adopted into the family of God, your identity changes.

You bear the family name now... CHRISTIAN.

Galatians 3:26 NIV

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

You're no longer an orphan. You're no longer an outcast. **You're no longer a SLAVE TO SIN! You're now a SON/DAUGHTER OF GOD!**

And today God is here to tell you that you're a man... you're a woman... not because of what you've done, but because of who you are in Him. And He's proud of you & He loves you. That's your **identity** now... **a dearly loved child.**

What's changed in the New Life?

CONFIDENCE

Confidence, not in a **Dr. Phil** self-confidence way... I'm talking about in a real, soul-deep CONFIDENCE. Because of Jesus I've been brought into the family of God and, as His son, I stand in confidence before my Good Father.

Think of it in your own life – *As a father, I have infinite grace for my own kids... not for everybody else's!!!!... but for MINE!* Right? The neighborhood kids come over & my grace is very small for them!

And if you are God's child, He has infinite grace for YOU. **You're not a neighborhood kid to God... YOU'RE HIS OWN!**

The wrath of God comes onto the sons of disobedience... not on you.

Before you were a Christian, you were right to feel condemned... now you are clean.

Before you were a Christian, you should have been afraid of the future... now you are free.

Romans 8:14-15 NLT

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

That's really interesting. It talks about the **spirit of fear**... and you would assume that instead of the spirit of fear, God would give us a spirit of bravery, a spirit of confidence. But God doesn't do that... **To counter the spirit of FEAR, God gives us the spirit of SONSHIP**... and that gives us CONFIDENCE.

1 John even says that we can have confidence on the day of judgment.

That even when the world is LITERALLY being ripped apart & people are LITERALLY being thrown into Hell, we will stand CONFIDENT before God. When the whole world is crashing down, you will stand in the middle of it and b/c you're a child of God you'll say, **"I'm not afraid."**

On the day of Judgment, Jesus isn't going to be like, **"Oh snap! God is really angry! Everybody duck!"** NO! He's going to be standing there, as a Son, confident & bold. And on the day of judgment, we'll be as confident as Jesus.

And the point is, **if we can stand confident even on THAT day... how much more can we live life confident & bold with a Good Father now?**

And that drives condemnation & fear & rejection out the window. God isn't waiting to reject you. He's not waiting for you to finally come back so He can beat you! **He's a Good Father who just wants you with Him.**

Jesus tells a story to illustrate all this... it's a familiar story about a **Prodigal Son**. Let's try to read it with fresh eyes over our last few minutes...

Luke 15:11-12 NIV

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

Yes, **this sounds just as bad as it was**. This son is in essence saying, **"Dad I wish you were dead so that I could have my share of all the stuff. But since you aren't dead yet, just go ahead and give me my inheritance."**

13 Not long after that, the younger son sold all he had, journeyed into a far country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.

There is so much wrong here! **Not only** did this son ask for his inheritance while his father was still living, **He SOLD IT while his father was still alive!**

And notice the connection of **'the younger son sold all he had'** and **'he journeyed into a far country'**. The boy was getting the heck out of Dodge!

The COMMUNITY wanted to call the **Sopranos** and whack the kid!

Because this was the **most despicable thing that someone could do... lose their inheritance to Gentiles.** And so the Jews set up a system to shame it...

Any Jewish boy who lost his inheritance to Gentiles **would face the Kezazah ceremony if he dared return home.**

Kezazah – To cut off

The community would fill a huge clay pot with burned vegetables and break it in front of the person while saying "You are cut off from your people".

And then they would have nothing to do with him. He could starve to death right in front of them for all they cared.

So, as the prodigal leaves town, he knows he can't come back home. But no worry... Because **now he has enough to make it on his own!** **He's decided he doesn't need his father anymore.**

14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

The prodigal son had never taken Financial Peace University! He didn't listen to the Dave Ramsey podcast or read the Wall Street Journal.

And he lost everything...

This is bad!... REALLY BAD! Not only has he lost all his money to gentiles, now he is feeding their pigs!

Touching a pig made you **ceremonially unclean** and you had to go through this long list of to-do's to make yourself clean again. That was just touching a pig! This boy wasn't only touching a pig, he was feeding them, cleaning up after them and even wanted to be one just so he could eat!

And NO ONE helped him.

There was no better way for Jesus to lay out a situation where someone had hit rock bottom... Ever been there before?

17 But when he came to himself [everyone say, **"Thank God we can come to our senses"**] he said, 'How many of my father's craftsmen have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father...

NOTICE THIS - **The prodigal son decided to return because things were BAD,** not because things were **GOOD!** He hadn't turned his money into millions and was now running a **ChickFila!**

And here's the Truth. **Sometimes the most loving thing a loving Father can do... is let you hit ROCK BOTTOM...** let you fall flat on your face. **"No! That's not true! God loves us and wants to bless us."** Absolutely. God does love you & wants to bless you... but not at the expense of your soul. What does it profit you to gain the whole world but lose your soul?

Have you ever seen **Montel Williams** where the mom brings the rebellious kid in & then the **DRILL INSTRUCTOR** comes in & starts yelling at him!!!! **This is what we call tough love.**

So if you've hit rock bottom, sometimes it's because, for your own good, God's giving you some TOUGH LOVE.

So we find this son... broken... weeping... shamed... **knee deep in pigs**, starving, lost all his money, & hopeless... but **he has one more card left.**
18 I will arise and go to my father, and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; fashion out of me a craftsman.'

This wasn't a sincere apology. He is trying to manipulate his father into taking him back.

Notice the son **doesn't offer to be a slave.** Why? Because **the son has figured out how he is going to do this.** He is going to have his father train him to be a craftsman so that he can pay him back so that he will be accepted as a son again... **He's figured out how to work his way back into the family.**

So the son sets off, stumbling home, hungry, lost, dead to his community, penniless, barefoot and smelling like pigs. **BUT he has his speech prepared.**

As he comes over the FINAL HILL with his village in the distance, he takes a deep breath and starts to prepare himself for what is to come. He sees the children pointing. He sees them all preparing the **Kezazah ceremony** with big smiles on their faces. They were hoping he would fail and return.

And you can almost imagine the people standing there with the clay pot, waiting to SHUN HIM & tell him to turn around & go die somewhere else.

But then there's a commotion behind them. And a voice that is yelling, **"Get out of my way. Clear the street!"**

It's the FATHER and He is yelling and He is running. Because he had been waiting for his son to return home too. He knew his son would fail & every morning he went out to his doorstep & sat there waiting for his son to come home...

And this day his dreams finally come true. And he sees this figure on the horizon... he's so dirty & he looks so defeated. **"BUT HE'S MY SON."** And he drops what he's doing, picks up the bottom of his robe & takes off RUNNING.

Don't miss this - Middle Eastern men don't run. It's shameful for them to do so. It's an absolute disgrace to bare your legs.

The son sees the community up ahead of him with the clay pot in their hands, eyes trained on him... and then all of a sudden their eyes dart to an old man running down the street. And he bursts through the crowd.

Their eyes aren't on the filthy son anymore, they're on the father.

You can almost see the nail holes in his hands and feet as he runs. **The father accepts upon himself the shame due his son.**

And as his father runs closer, **the son begins preparing his speech.**

But **the father doesn't slow down and he tackles his son.** And he begins to hug him and kiss him. ***I can almost see MY FACE on the son's face.*** The son doesn't know what to say. I don't know what to say. I am astonished. Why would my Father humiliate himself for me?

And in response to this love by my Father, all I can get out is, ***"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."*** I drop trying to pay it all back. I don't try and explain what happened, because my father doesn't care where I have been or what I have done. He only cares that I am back.

And the father turns to his servants who ran down the hill after him and says, ***"Quick! Give him the best robe. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."***

And the Father restores him back to his FAMILY.

Jesus on the cross suffered abandonment and cried out ***"Lord, Lord why have you forsaken me?"*** Jesus was abandoned so we would never have to be abandoned. He experienced fatherless so we would never have to be fatherless.

A lot of us carry around an orphan spirit.

But today I have good news for you! You don't have to be an orphan anymore. Because God's waiting on the front porch... & even if you had the best father, but especially if you had the worst, God is here today to be a good, good Father to you... to welcome you into a new family & to embrace you as His own... to mend up any broken area & to heal your soul.

And we're about to have a really special moment here as we close...

If you weren't desired by your parents... If you feel rejected by your parents... If you've ever wished you had never been born... If you are struggling with homosexuality... Maybe if you laugh a lot to cover up the pain or are a perfectionist or feel inadequate... **If you've never felt an innocent touch from a man, without hidden motives or asking something in return...** If your father wasn't there for you... If your father never blessed you... If your father never hugged you... If you never heard from your father, ***"I love you. Today you are a man. Today you are a woman. I'm proud of you."***... or even if you simply want to be hugged by a dad... **then we are here right now to do that for YOU.**

Invite fathers up - We are here to stand in the gap on behalf of an earthly father, representing a Good Heavenly Father. We want to bless you & hug you & tell you that you are loved. (talk about types of hugs!)

"We're all fathers up here."