

"Father God ..."

Abba's Children series (If you don't know the word, "Abba" you are going to learn a word that has the ability to be life transforming.)

Overview of annual mission month

Partnering,
PEACE plan
Plant churches
Equip servant leaders
Assist the poor
Care for the sick and orphans
Educate the next generation

Week #1 (today) What is it to have God as your father?
Thursday evening BAM seminar-

Week #2 7/11 Opening the 4-14 window

Week #3 7/18 What are we supposed to do?
Missionaries, trip reports in ABF's & Guests from India (PM)

Week #4 7/25 Father's heart for the Fatherless
7/31 Orality learning seminar (60% of earth's population cannot read or write)

A teaching strategy that is based on storytelling, visual display, and native song.

Prayer...

There is a word you have to refer to the male parent in your life.

III. Poll the "under 10 year olds" for that word used to describe their male parent.

Follow the word, "Abba" in the Bible. ("I don't even know what that is.") Good, you are going to learn a word that may just change your life. It appears 4 times. The first one is somewhat invisible.

I. What Jesus taught...

-Lord's Prayer

(Lk. 11) Lord, teach us to pray... These disciples knew how to pray. The Jews prayed three times a day: sunrise, noon, sundown. What did the Jews do when they came to say their prayers? The Jew would recite the Shema in Hebrew as well as the classic, set prayers.

The average saint merely recited the prayers of the community. Set prayers:

1. Shema "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."-Deut. 6:4
2. A series of 12 prayers (at the time of Jesus)

A great saint was free to make up his own prayers.

So, they knew how to pray. But, they did not know how to pray as Jesus did. So, Jesus teaches them to pray.

Dr. Kenneth Bailey taught in Beirut for two decades. As a linguist, he is able to recognize that the Lord's prayer starts off in Aramaic.

Jesus starts off by teaching His disciples to pray in Aramaic because it was their common language, the language of their heart.

American child psychologists tell us that the average American baby begins to speak between the ages of fourteen and eighteen months. Regardless of the sex of the child, the first word normally spoken at that age is da-da, da, daddy. A little Jewish child speaking Aramaic in first-century Palestine at the same age level would begin to say ab-ab, ab, abba.

"Abba" first word. The first time it was used to address God was the words of Jesus.
- Lord's Prayer -

In each case, the Greek translators put "abba, (Aramaic) ha pater (Greek)" He put in the Aramaic and then translated it into Greek. Why?

The other words are in Greek, not Aramaic. These appearances of Abba are in Greek texts. Why not just say "Father" and be done with it?

This Aramaic word is the word for Daddy! Jesus says, "When you address God, say 'Daddy'".

Our Lord, for the first time uses it as a title and in the colloquial term of the day. This is the first word that a child is taught in Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria (not in Egypt or Iraq). Those closest to the origins of the Bible have held on to the use of this term even though they speak Hebrew and Arabic etc., and do not speak Aramaic.

In the OT, the word "Father" occurs as an adjective. In Isaiah, God is described like a "Father". But, the word is never used as an address.

"You are like a father to me" is different than, "Hi dad"

The first is an adjective. The second is a title of address.

Jesus teaches us to address the Holy sovereign God of the Universe as Father. That is, get this, Jesus teaches us to address the Holy sovereign of the universe the same way he does. Others in Jesus' day were saying Holy One, All Mighty, or Rock, or Lord of Host, Jesus was simply saying, Father.

It's the words we heard on his lips again and again from the beginning of his earthly life. At every point along the way, Jesus says, "I only do what I see the father do, I only say what I hear the father say". Jesus is self-consciously the son, the son of God the Father, his whole identity is son of the Father and it is into this identity that Jesus brings us.

Jesus' revelation was nothing less than a revolution. It was scandalous. From that moment on, no Christian can ever say one form of prayer is as good as another or one religion is as good as another.

Jesus is saying we may address the infinite, transcendent, almighty God with the intimacy, familiarity, and unshaken trust that a sixteen-month-old baby has sitting on his father's lap - da, da, daddy.

This Aramaic word became the symbol of the new relationship which the believer had with God through Christ. They were able, through the Spirit, to cry out, "Abba".

II. What Jesus practiced...

"If you took the love of all the best mothers and fathers who have lived in the course of human history, all their goodness, kindness, patience, fidelity, wisdom, tenderness, strength, and love and united all those qualities in a single person, that person's love would only be a faint shadow of the furious love and mercy in the heart of God the Father addressed to you and me at this moment." (Manning, Abba's Child, p. 43)

When you look to heaven, know that there is a dad there whose love for you is the best possible love.

"...Jesus singularly understands the tenderness and compassion of the Father's heart. Eternally begotten from the Father, He is Abba's Child. Why did Jesus love sinners, ragamuffins, and the rabble who knew nothing of the Law? Because His Abba loved them. He did nothing on His own, but only what His Abba told him. Through meal-sharing, preaching, teaching, and healing, Jesus acted out His understanding of the Father's indiscriminate love-" Manning, p.65

Col. 2:9 "For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form"

-Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-36)

"Abba, Father" This was the worst storm of Jesus' life.

III. My prayer in our storm has been, "Dad, help."

"We are children, perhaps, at the very moment when we know that it is as children that God loves us - not because we have deserved his love and not in spite of our undeserving; not because we try and not because we recognize the futility of our trying; but simply because he has chosen to love us. We are children because he is our father; and all our efforts, fruitful and fruitless, to do good, to speak truth, to understand, are the efforts of children who, for all their precocity, are children still in that before we loved him, he loved us, as children, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

-Buechner, the magnificent defeat, 135

III. Nicki and Dustin Stewart's 3 year old son was hit by a car and killed. These are Dustin's words a couple days later.

"God took Eli out of our world on Wednesday June 10, 2010 around 4:00 in the afternoon.

Eli had been at his grandparents' house with his cousins for a week and a half. He was having the time of his life playing with them all day every day. When he died he was probably still having a great time thinking about what he was going to find on the other side of the road. We couldn't ask for an easier death. He was excited and happy and didn't even know he was in danger. Then he was with God, happier than he'd ever been in his whole life here on earth. And that is where he is today. The accident was incredibly unlikely. It was not simply a one in a million accident; it was God working his purpose. God chose to take Eli at that particular time and this was a very merciful method for him to use. God was so merciful to us to let it happen while we were in the US and not in China. We were immediately surrounded by Niki's family and co-workers from China that God had arranged to be in that area at that time.

Eli changed our lives forever. I don't know why God chose to take him away so soon in his life. I'll never know until I can ask God face to face. But I do know that our God is always good and always wise. We trust him with our Eli and we know that this is what is best for us and for our Eli. Eli was always full of joy and now he is full of more joy than he has ever had before. He is with his little brother who went to heaven two years before him when Niki had a miscarriage. He is now able to ask God about all those Bible stories that that he loved. He is waiting for us, and someday we will join him. We will never forget him and we will never let him go. He is with us now and always. He still loves us and we still love him."

In the storms of your life, you will need a dad in heaven.

III. What the Apostle Paul believed...

-Romans 8:12-17

Adoption

PAUL is introducing us to another of the great life metaphors in which he describes the new relationship of the Christian to God. He speaks of the Christian being adopted into the family of God. It is only when we understand how serious and complicated adoption was in Roman society that we really understand the depth of meaning in this passage.

Roman adoption was always rendered more serious and more difficult by the Roman *patria potestas*. This was the father's power over his family; it was the power of absolute disposal and control, and in the early days was actually the *power of life and death*. In regard to his father, a Roman son never came of age. No matter how old he was, he was still under the *patria potestas*, in the absolute possession and under the absolute control, of his father. Obviously this made adoption into another family a very difficult and serious step. In adoption a person had to pass from one *patria potestas* to another.

There were two steps. The first was known as *mancipatio*, and was carried out by a symbolic sale, in which copper money and scales were symbolically used. Three times the symbolism of sale was carried out. Twice the father symbolically sold his son, and twice he bought him back; but the third time he did not buy him back and thus the *patria potestas* was held to be broken. There followed a ceremony called *vindicatio*. The adopting father went to the *praetor*, one of the Roman magistrates, and presented a legal case for the transference of

the person to be adopted into his *patria potestas*. When all this was completed, the adoption was complete. Clearly this was a serious and an impressive step.

But it is the consequences of adoption which are most significant for the picture that is in Paul's mind. There were four main ones.

- (i) The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the most binding legal way, he got a new father.
- (ii) It followed that he became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were afterwards born, it did not affect his rights. He was inalienably co-heir with them.
- (iii) In law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; for instance, all debts were cancelled. He was regarded as a new person entering into a new life with which the past had nothing to do.
- (iv) In the eyes of the law he was absolutely the son of his new father.

That is what Paul is thinking of. He uses still another picture from Roman adoption. He says that God's spirit witnesses with our spirit that we really are his children. The adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of seven witnesses. Now, suppose the adopting father died and there was some dispute about the right of the adopted son to inherit, one or more of the seven witnesses stepped forward and swore that the adoption was genuine. Thus the right of the adopted person was guaranteed and he entered into his inheritance. So, Paul is saying, it is the Holy Spirit himself who is the witness to our adoption into the family of God.

We see then that every step of Roman adoption was meaningful in the mind of Paul when he transferred the picture to our adoption into the family of God. Once we were in the absolute control of our own sinful human nature; but God, in his mercy, has brought us into his absolute possession. The old life has no more rights over us; God has an absolute right. The past is cancelled and its debts are wiped out; we begin a new life with God and become heirs of all his riches. If that is so, we become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, God's own Son. That which Christ inherits, we also inherit. If Christ had to suffer, we also inherit that suffering; but if Christ was raised to life and glory, we also inherit that life and glory.

It was Paul's picture that when a man became a Christian he entered into the very family of God. He did nothing to deserve it; God, the great Father, in his amazing love and mercy, has taken the lost, helpless, poverty-stricken, debt-laden sinner and adopted him into his own family, so that the debts are cancelled and the glory inherited.¹

J. I. Packer's comments in *Knowing God*: "Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."

-Galatians 4:1-7

In the ancient world the process of growing up was much more defined than it is in our culture.

(i) **In the Jewish world**, on the first Sabbath after a boy had passed his twelfth birthday, his father took him to the Synagogue, where he became *A Son of the Law*. The father said a benediction, "Blessed be thou, O God, who has taken from me the responsibility for this boy." The boy prayed a prayer in which he said, "O my God and God of my fathers! On this solemn and sacred day, which marks my passage from boyhood to manhood, I humbly raise my eyes unto thee, and declare with sincerity and truth, that henceforth I will keep thy commandments, and undertake and bear the responsibility of mine actions towards thee."

There was a clear dividing line in the boy's life; almost overnight he became a man.

(ii) **In Greece** a boy was under his father's care from seven until he was eighteen. He then became what was called an *ephebos*, which may be translated *cadet*, and for two years he was under the direction of the state. The Athenians were divided into ten *phratriai*, or *clans*. Before a lad became an *ephebos*, at a festival called the *Apaturia*, he was received into the

The letter to the Romans. 2000 (W. Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, Ed.). The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (105–107). Philadelphia: The Westminster Press.

clan; and at a ceremonial act his long hair was cut off and offered to the gods. Once again, growing up was quite a definite process.

(iii) Under Roman law the year at which a boy grew up was not definitely fixed, but it was always between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. At a sacred festival in the family called the *Liberalia* he took off the *toga praetexta*, which was a toga with a narrow purple band at the foot of it and put on the *toga virilis*, which was a plain toga which adults wore. He was then conducted by his friends and relations down to the forum and formally introduced to public life. It was essentially a religious ceremony. And once again there was a quite definite day on which the lad attained manhood. There was a Roman custom that on the day a boy or girl grew up, the boy offered his ball, and the girl her doll, to Apollo to show that they had put away childish things.

So, when a boy was an *infant* in the eyes of the law, he might be the owner of a vast property but he could take no legal decision; he was not in control of his own life; everything was done and directed for him; and, therefore, for all practical purposes he had no more freedom than if he were a slave; but when he became a man he entered into his full inheritance.

Paul says that when the Galatians—and indeed all men—were mere children, they were under the tyranny of the law; then, when everything was ready, Christ came and released men from that tyranny. So now men are no longer slaves of the law; they have become sons and have entered into their inheritance. The childhood which belonged to the law should be past; the freedom of manhood has come.

The proof that we are sons comes from the instinctive cry of the heart. In man's deepest need he cries, "Father!" to God. Paul uses the double phrase, "Abba! Father!" *Abba* is the Aramaic word for Father. It must have been often on Jesus's lips, and its sound was so sacred that men kept it in the original tongue. This instinctive cry of man's heart Paul believes to be the work of the Holy Spirit. If our hearts so cry, we know that we are sons, and all the inheritance of grace is ours.

For Paul, he who governed his life by slavery to the law was still a child; he who had learned the way of grace had become a mature man in the Christian faith.