

## FATHERING OUR CHILDREN AS GOD FATHERS US

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### I. Introduction

“Our Father . . .” How astonishing, remarkable, nearly unbelievable that Jesus would command His disciples to address God, in prayer, with, “Our Father.” Of course, many of us don’t find this particularly astonishing or remarkable. We are quite accustomed to thinking of God as Father and praying to Him as Father. But, when Jesus gave this command, it was *utterly* astonishing, remarkable and nearly unbelievable. Why? Two reasons: 1) The Jewish world of Jesus day never referred to God as Father. So, e.g., Jesus Seminar scholars voted “Our Father” to be the only part of the Lord’s Prayer that is authentic, due to its uniqueness! 2) Jesus Himself regularly refers to God as *His* Father. But of course, *He* deserves it. But *us*? Amazingly, Jesus commands His disciples to join Him in praying, “Our Father.” Yes, it is truly astonishing and wonderfully remarkable.

Now, what does it mean to address God as Father? Just what kind of Father is He? The biblical concept of God as Father has **two related ideas** which, to be thought of and believed in correctly, must both be understood and embraced. Either of these two ideas without the other results in a deeply distorted notion of God as Father. Only when both are together can we have the right understanding that can nurture our faith and hope in God as “our Father.”

What are these two ideas? I’ll summarize it here, and develop it through our consideration of the Lord’s Prayer along with some other supporting texts:

God, our Father: deserves . . . our worship, our reverence, our loyalty, our following  
And He delights in . . . our well-being, our renewal, our loveliness, our fullness

Let’s examine these two facets of God’s Fatherhood, particularly as they are demonstrated in the Lord’s Prayer.

### II. God, our Father, deserves our worship, our reverence, our loyalty, our following

Matthew 6:9-10            God is to be honored; His Kingdom and will desired and obeyed. Three imperatives in 9b and 10a

Exodus 20:12            Honor your father and your mother – notice the placement of this command, after commands to honor God (!), and before commands of how to relate to others

Malachi 1:6            If I am your father, where is my honor? It is expected!

1 Peter 1:14-17        children are to obey their father; God will judge

Hebrews 12:7-11      A good father disciplines for the good of the children, their wholeness and holiness

Summary: God deserves honor and respect; He expects His Lordship to be embraced, His will to be done; He will discipline and judge to bring about obedience and holiness

### III. God, our Father, delights in our well-being, our renewal, our loveliness, our fullness

Matthew 6:11-12      Daily provision (see 6:31-33), protection, merciful forgiveness; v. 11 – physical needs; v. 12 – spiritual needs

Psalm 89:20-29      v. 26 “my Father” – protection, provision

2 Corinthians 1:2-4      grace, peace, comfort, mercy

James 1:16-18      every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights. *Always good!*

Summary: God possesses an unfaltering, unwavering commitment to the well-being of His children; He delights in being the One who meets their every need, helps them when in trouble, comforts them when sorrowful; His presence brings grace, peace, goodness and joy.

### IV. Application

- A. Consider first our walk of faith with God as children of our Heavenly Father. Do we relate to Him as the true, holy, and loving Father that He is?

Think first of respect, honor, obedience. Are we quick to obey? Do we fear the Lord? Do we want to please Him in all we think, say, and do?

Then consider His infinite love, His immeasurable kindness, His unsurpassed longing for our best. Do we trust Him implicitly? Do we go to *Him* when we are in need? Do we honor *Him* as the giver, the provider, the sustainer, the healer, the helper, the friend?

- B. Second, fathers, consider the two ideas that, together, comprise the biblical portrayal of God as Father. Apply it to your own fatherly relationship with your children.

Think first of respect, honor, obedience. Do you expect your children to show you respect and heed your word, precisely because you are their father? Do you see their obedience to you as foundational for their obedience to God? Are you training them to respect and obey their mother, and show respect and kindness in their relationship with siblings? How are we doing, dads, in mentoring and monitoring the spiritual growth of our children, and how are they responding to our fatherly authority and direction?

Second, consider God’s fatherly love, care, provision, protection, well-being. Do your children know, in the depths of their hearts, that their dad loves them and wants their very best? Do they see God’s love and care for them through their own human father’s love and care for them? Are you considering how you can best demonstrate to your children your deep and abiding love for them?

Honor and love, respect and gentleness, discipline and delight need to mark our fathering in ways that are modeled after how God is Father to us.