

ABBA-Father

THE NAME OF GOD: ABBA, FATHER

TOPICS ON THIS PAGE:

[Introduction](#)

[Definition of Abba](#)

[Mark 14:36 Jesus cries "Abba! Father!"](#)

[Romans 8:15 Saints cry "Abba! Father!"](#)

[Galatians 4:6 Spirit cries "Abba! Father!"](#)

[Matthew 6:9 "Our Father"](#)

[Old Testament References to God as "Father"](#)

[Abba, Father - Much Shorter Summary Page](#)

ABBA, FATHER: A Google search retrieves over 14 million hits for "**Abba**" (associated with "God" and not with the pop group "Abba" which yields 94 million hits!), so clearly this word is a popular name for churches, Christian groups, ministries, funds, etc. In 1988, as a new believer in Christ, I recall listening over and over to a beautiful Maranatha praise album entitled "**Abba**" which was introduced with these words: "This album...centers on a word of worship which comes from the lips of Jesus our Saviour, a word which God holds very dear. This word is **Abba**. **Abba** is one of several words of worship adopted by every nation, people and language...Wherever the Gospel of Jesus Christ goes, so goes this word of worship. **Abba** belongs to the family vocabulary of the people of faith throughout the world."

Abba is one of the great names of God (See **Name of the LORD is a Strong Tower: Summary**), and indeed may be the "*summum bonum*," the highest good Name of God, for no other Name so completely reflects the reversal of the curse and the separation that resulted from Adam's sin bringing separation to all Adam's sons of disobedience (Eph 2:2, Eph 5:6). When we are born again and the Spirit enters us and impels us to cry the intimate family name "Abba! Father!", we surely see in this great acclamation, a climax to the redemption story. These notes are a feeble attempt to probe the depth of the profundity of the priceless Name of God (cf Job 26:14), the thrice Holy God Who we can now openly address as Abba, because of the finished work of His Son. Hallelujah!

Martin Luther has well said that

There is more eloquence in the words '**Abba, Father,**' than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together!

God promises believers "I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me" (2Cor 6:18) And because of the "great love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God" (1Jn 3:1), we now cry "Abba! Father!" And yet do we fully understand the what it means to be able to confidently cry out **Abba** to the Almighty God?

As **Spurgeon** alludes to the priceless treasure we gain when we gain the right to cry "Abba! Father! writing...

Surely if relationships to ancient and noble families make men think highly of themselves, we have whereof to glory over the heads of them all. Lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make thee negligent to trace this pedigree, and suffer no foolish attachment to present vanities to occupy thy thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious, this heavenly honour of union with Christ. (The Sword and Trowel: 1865)

J I Packer addresses the importance of the truth of "Abba! Father!" by first asking...

What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is **one who has God as Father**. In other words, we are designed to live in a family. Our highest privilege and deepest need is to experience the holy God as our loving Father, to approach Him without fear and to be assured of His fatherly care and concern...But cannot this be said of every person, Christian or not? Emphatically no! The idea that all are children of God is not found in the Bible anywhere. The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again. (Jn 1:12-13)... In the same way, you sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If

you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. "Father" is the Christian name for God.

Abba ([0005 - click to listen to pronunciation accentuating second syllable](#)) (**Abba**) is transliterated as Abba into English from the corresponding Aramaic word which was used in the everyday language of families as a term addressing one's father. Children, as well as adult sons and daughters, used **Abba** when speaking to their fathers. And so **Abba** conveys a warm, intimate sense just as with our expression "Dear father." **Abba** emphasizes the warm, intimate and very personal relationship which exists between the believer and God. In Abba filial tenderness, trust and love find their combined expression.

William Barclay...

There is a world of loveliness in this word **Abba**, which to our western ears is altogether hidden, unless we know the facts about it. Joachim Jeremias, in his book *The Parables of Jesus*, writes thus: "Jesus' use of the word **Abba** in addressing God is unparalleled in the whole of Jewish literature. The explanation of this fact is to be found in the statement of the fathers Chrysostom, Theodore, and Theodoret that Abba, (as *jaba* is still used today in Arabic) was the word used by a young child to its father; **it was an everyday family word, which no one had ventured to use in addressing God. Jesus did. He spoke to His heavenly Father in as childlike, trustful, and intimate a way as a little child to its father.**" We know how our children speak to us and what they call us who are fathers. That is the way in which Jesus spoke to God. Even when he did not fully understand, even when his one conviction was that God was urging him to a cross, he called Abba, as might a little child. Here indeed is trust, a trust which we must also have in that God whom Jesus taught us to know as Father.

Swindoll explains that...

The Aramaic **abba** stems from what might be called "baby talk." According to the Jewish Talmud, when a child is weaned, "it learns to say *abba* [daddy] and *imma* [mommy]" (Berakoth 40a; Sanhedrin 70b). In time, the meaning of the word was broadened so that it was no longer a form of address used by little children, but was used by adult sons and daughters as well. The childish character of the word diminished and **abba** acquired the warm, familiar ring which we may feel in such an expression as "**dear father.**"

Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find the term **abba** used in addressing God. The pious Jews sensed too great a gap between themselves and God to use such a familiar expression. Rabbinic Judaism has an interesting example of *abba* being used with reference to God. The Talmud records, "When the world had need of rain, our teachers used to send the schoolchildren to Rabbi Hanan ha Nehba [first century B.C.], and they would seize the hem of his cloak and call out to him: 'Dear father [*abba*], dear father [*abba*], give us rain.' He said before God: 'Sovereign of the world, do it for the sake of these who cannot distinguish between an *abba* who can give rain and an *abba* who can give no rain'" (Taanith 23b). Note that the rabbi used the respectful invocation, "Sovereign of the world," rather than the term *abba*, in addressing God.

Jesus used *abba* when addressing God the Father in His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. " 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will' " (Mark 14:36). **In using this expression Jesus spoke as a child would speak to its father. This reflects something of the intimacy and trust that characterized His relationship with God.**

As the Holy Spirit testifies that believers are God's children (Rom. 8:16), they are invited to cry "abba, Father" (Ro 8:15; Gal. 4:6). **Believers can address God in this way because of their relationship with God through faith. What an encouragement to know that we can pray to the Father with the same sense of warmth and intimacy in our relationship with God that Jesus enjoyed.**

My children know how to ask for favors in such a way that they get a positive response. They know that demanding and nagging don't work. They have learned that I respond best to sweetness, love, and respect. My daughter might say, "Daddy dear, there is a terrific dress on sale at Nordstrom's. Would you split the cost with me?" How can I say anything but yes to that kind of an appeal? God made dads for this very purpose and there is joy in fulfilling our destiny!

As I delight to respond to my children and meet their needs, so God the Father delights to answer those who address Him as abba, "Dear Father." He has both the resources and the resolve to answer

our prayers and meet our needs. ([Understanding Christian Theology- Charles R. Swindoll, Roy B. Zuck](#))

Abba is a family word which indicates a close, personal, intimate relationship with God as one's Father. This "family term" was used by Jesus in His prayer in Gethsemane (Mk 14:36). **Abba** is used two other times in the NT (Ro 8:15, Gal 4:6), one of the Spirit crying out and the other of believers crying out "Abba" to God because the Spirit of God has made it clear that they are God's children.

Spurgeon

Oh, blessed, blessed state of heart to feel that now we are born into the family of God, and that the choice word which no slave might ever pronounce may now be pronounced by us, "Abba"! It is a child's word, such as a little child utters when first he opens his mouth to speak, and it runs the same both backwards and forwards, -AB-BA. Oh to have a childlike spirit that, in whatever state of heart I am, I may still be able to say, in the accents even of spiritual infancy, "Abba, Father"!

Jews of Old Testament times never used **Abba** to address God, but as discussed more below, Jesus used **Abba** when praying to His Father (Mark 14:36). In so doing, Jesus the Mediator of a New Covenant (Heb 9:15, cf Heb 8:6, Heb 12:24) was foreshadowing the new way of approach and address to the One Whom "No man has seen... at any time." (Jn 1:18, cf Jn 6:46, Ex 33:20). The apostle Paul applied this great truth to all who have entered the New Covenant through faith in Christ, resulting in God adopting them as His sons and making them joint heirs with Christ of His heavenly inheritance (Ro 8:15-17; Gal 4:5-6)

The [Dictionary of Paul and His Letters](#) comments that...

The original meaning of **Abba** and the original usage of the phrase "Abba, Father" in addressing God have long been discussed among NT scholars. The majority view (following J. Jeremias) considers **Abba** an Aramaic word (*abba*) used by small children in addressing their fathers.

Abba expresses the intimacy of the family relationship as one would expect from a unhesitating trust and dependence from a child who is wholly secure in the loving arms of their father, thus prompting a crying out of "Dearest Father." **Hughes** agrees noting that "Abba meant something like Daddy—but with a more reverent touch than when we use it. The best rendering is "Dearest Father.""

James Alexander

"Abba." It is the word of the babe, when first in that dialect he knows the filial language, and reads the father's soul in his eyes; the simplest articulation of language; the most trustful outburst of affection—"Abba, Father."... When trials grow heavier and more frequent, remember Him, who under the greatest and heaviest trial, still looked up, and said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto you—take away this cup from me; nevertheless not as I will—but as You will!" ([CONSOLATION](#))

Although the New Testament is recorded in **Koine** (common) **Greek** (which was the common language of the Roman Empire and would reach the largest audience), most scholars feel that Jesus actually spoke in **Aramaic** in everyday conversation and so it follows that whenever He spoke the words **Father** (Greek, Pater), Jesus was actually addressing His Father with the endearing term **Abba**.

[Come to Our Poor Nature's Night](#)

In us "Abba, Father!" cry,
Earnest of the bliss on high,
Seal of immortality,
Comforter Divine.
--George Rawson

Adam Clarke (commenting on Mk 14:36) writes...

This Syriac word, which intimates filial affection and respect, and parental tenderness, seems to have been used by our blessed Lord merely considered as man, to show his complete submission to his Father's will, and the tender affection which he was conscious his Father had for him,

In the [Babylonian Talmud](#) (Barnes says the Babylonian [Gemara](#)), slaves in a Jewish household were forbidden from using the term **Abba** in addressing the head of the family. What a beautiful picture then that saved sinners can now address the thrice Holy God as "Abba!" In another writing in the Babylonian Talmud **Abba** was combined with the word "rav" (master) to coin the term "rabba" a term of respect for revered Torah sage.

In Gal 4:6 and Romans 8:15-16, **Abba**, is used to describe the cry of the newly adopted child of God. By way of tone of expression,

it is associated with "crying," krazo, being onomatopoeic, sounding like a screeching bird, or the children "shouting in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David'" (Matt. 21:15)." In the human realm, one of the first expressions of recognition by a young child is "papa" and "mama." In an analogous way the new born believer is impelled to cry out Abba! Father!" in assurance that they now are sons and daughters who possess an intimate, unbreakable relationship and oneness with the Father not known in the Old Testament, but now made real and personal through Jesus and the New Covenant in His blood.

Martin Luther

The apostle places a Hebrew word in apposition with a Greek word; he says **Abba**, Pater (Father). In the Hebrew, Abba means "father"; hence the prelates in certain cloisters are called "abbots." In former times the holy hermits gave their chiefs the name Abba, Father. These terms were introduced also into the Latin and German. Abba, Pater is equivalent to "Father, Father." In full German, Mein Vater, Mein Vater; or Lieber Vater, Lieber Vater--My Father, My Father, or Dear Father, Dear Father.

Dictionary Articles on "Abba"

Abba is used only 3 times in Scriptures (Mark 14:36, Ro 8:15, Gal 4:6 -[see below](#)) and each use is the identical phrase "**Abba! Father!**" which in Greek is "*abba ho pater*", literally "Abba, the Father. The phrase "the Father" serves to "translate" the Aramaic word "Abba" to any Greek reader who might not understand the Aramaic word. It is notable that all three NT uses of **Abba** are in the context of crying out to the Father in prayer. Abba is an intimate term which supports the truth that those who are impelled to use it in addressing God enjoy a close relationship with Him. Jesus Christ used Abba as a consequence of His natural sonship of God, whereas we as believers use it as a result of our adopted sonship of God.

John D Grassmick writes that...

Significantly, almost nowhere in Jewish devotional literature is this familiar word used to address God out of intense respect for His sovereign majesty (Sir. 51:10 is an exceptional use). In an entirely new departure, Jesus used this intimate term to address God in prayer thereby expressing His Own unique relationship to God as Father. The early Christians carried on the use of "Abba" in prayer as indicated in Gal 4:6 and in Ro 8:15, thereby giving expression to their own "adoption as sons of God" through Christ and their possession of the Spirit. As those "in Christ" believers experience a truly intimate relationship with God as Father. So, even today, Christians often begin their prayers with the words "Dear heavenly Father... " ([Darrell Bock, editor. Bible Knowledge Word Study - Acts through Ephesians. Page 179. 2006](#))

John MacArthur writes...

Abba is an informal Aramaic term for Father, connoting intimacy, tenderness, dependence, and complete lack of fear or anxiety. Modern English equivalents would be Daddy, or Papa. When Jesus was agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane as He was about to take upon Himself the sins of the world, He used that name of endearment, praying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for Thee; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). (Romans)

A Scriptural Description of Abba...

In 2Cor 6:18 Paul quotes God Who promises "I will be a Father to you and you shall be sons and daughters to Me," says the Lord Almighty (all powerful and able to fulfill what He promises - **Do you believe that beloved?**) And in another place Paul explains that God "predestined us to **adoption** as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will" (Eph 1:5), and fulfilled our "destiny" by sending "forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem those who were under (subject to, totally under the power, authority and control of) the Law, that we might receive the **adoption** as sons" (Gal 4:4-5) which occurred when we "received Him (Jesus and God gave us) the right (and authority) to become children of God, to those who believe in His Name (Jesus)" (Jn 1:12). Now because we are God's sons and daughters, we have not received "a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but (we) have received a spirit of **adoption** by which we cry out "**Abba! Father!**" "for through Him (Jesus) we have our access into one Spirit to the Father." (Eph 2:18) Again Paul writes that "because (we) are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts (Ro 5:5, Ro 8:9) crying, "**Abba! Father!**" (Gal 4:6)

Barnhouse: (God) has come to us in Jesus Christ, and to those who receive Him, He gives the authority to become His sons, even to as many as believe on His name (John 1:12). This is the new birth. He then puts within their hearts the Holy Spirit of adoption, of placement as sons. It is this public acknowledgment before the universe that makes it possible for the believer to come in spirit and in truth, to look up into His face without fear, and to call Him, "Abba, Father." (God's Heirs: Romans 8:1-39)

Spurgeon: This work (of regeneration, Jn 3:7) is wonderful because of the grandeur of the relationship into which it introduces us. The child that is born has a father from the very fact of its birth, and we that are born from above cry "**Abba, Father,**" from the very fact that we are regenerated. **Adoption** gives us the rights of children, but **regeneration** alone gives us the nature of children. Because we are sons God sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry "Abba, Father." (Ro 8:15) If I have been born again, no matter what my station in life or position in society, then God is my Father, and it follows that Jesus Christ is my Brother; and this not merely in form and in name, as men call each other brethren when there is no actual relationship, but there is a real relationship between us and Christ Jesus and the divine Father, for we are made "partakers of the divine nature." (2Pe 1:4) We are the sons of God (1Jn 3:1), and if sons of God, then are we brethren of Christ. It must be so, and it follows from this that, if children, then heirs, and if Christ is the heir, we are joint-heirs with Him (Ro 8:17). My brethren, what privileges spring out of the relationship which arises from the new birth, for our Father then pledges Himself for our support, for our comfort, for our education, for all that is necessary for our perfection in the day of the home-bringing when we shall see Him face to face. What can happen to a man so great as to be born again? Suppose some of the poorest of the earth who have swept the streets for a paltry pittance should suddenly be elevated by royal favour to the peerage, or imagine that by some revolution of the wheel of providence they should become emperors and kings themselves; yet what of that? The change would be extraordinary, and men would wonder at it; for the passages in history which have been thought most noteworthy have been those wherein paupers have mounted from the dunghill to the throne, and fishermen have cast aside their rough garments to put on the imperial purple. But these strides from nothingness to greatness are inconsiderable and trifling compared with rising from being a slave of Satan to become a son of God. To be elevated by God Himself from the darkness and degradation and bondage under which we are brought by the fall and by actual sin to the liberty, to the glory, to the eternal blessedness of the children of God—this surpasses all conception. This can only be ours through our being born again. Our first birth makes us sons of Adam, our second birth makes us sons of God. Born of the flesh, we inherit corruption; we must be born of the Spirit to inherit incorruption. We come into this world heirs of sorrow because we are sons of the fallen man: our new life comes into the new world an heir of glory, because it is descended from the second man, the Lord from heaven. Thus I have spoken upon the wonderful character of this work, as well as upon the thoroughness of it. ([EVERY MAN'S NECESSITY](#))

While there is only **one** Son of God Who is "the radiance of His (God's) glory and the exact representation of His nature" (Heb 1:3), by grace through faith **many** sinners become sons through the process of "divine adoption" (Jn 1:12, 1Jn 3:1-2). Indeed, though we all "were formerly **alienated** and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds" (Col 1:21) divine...

adoption makes possible a remarkably intimate relationship with God in which we can now address Him as 'Abba,' the Aramaic word of endearment for "Father." While all men are the creation of God, only the [regenerate](#) are His sons by adoption. This sonship is so personal and intimate that the believer may feel perfect confidence in addressing God as "Abba." ([W A Criswell. Believer's Study Bible](#))

Kent Hughes writes that...

Jesus transformed the relationship with God from a distant, corporate experience into an intimate, one-to-one bond, and He taught His disciples to pray with the same intimacy. And that is what He does for us. The way we are to pray is "Our Father"—"Our Abba"—"Our Dearest Father." This is to be the foundational awareness of all of our prayer. We must honestly ask ourselves if this awareness pervades our prayer life. And then we must go further and ask ourselves if the sense of God's intimate Fatherhood is profound and growing. The impulse to address God as "Abba" (Dearest Father) is not only an indication of our spiritual health, but is a mark of the authenticity of our faith. (Abba, Father: The Lord's Pattern for Prayer)

The idea that God is our Father, our Abba, is not only a sign of our spiritual health and of the authenticity of our faith, it is one of the most healing doctrines in all of Scripture. Some grew up only with a mother and no father. Others grew up in conventional homes where the relationship with the father was negative at best. But whatever our background, we need the touch of a father, and our God wants to provide that. Some of us need to bow before God and simply say, "Dearest Father, Abba" and so find the wholeness and healing that he wants to give us... **The problem among some evangelical Christians today is the opposite - they have sentimentalized God's fatherhood so much that they have little concept of His holiness. Many Christians are flippantly sentimental about God, as if He is a celestial teddy bear. Such flip familiarity outwardly suggests super-intimacy with God but actually hides a defective knowledge of God.** ([Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom. Crossway Books](#)) (Emphasis mine)

Comment: I can personally affirm the truth of Hughes' comments. My biologic father deserted my mother

before I was one year old and my step father created a home environment wherein I was in constant fear of doing wrong, so that I "walked on eggs" continually in fear of not being good enough to be accepted by him (which I like so many children today never experienced). It was not until age 39, when I was born again, that I realized it was not an issue of my worthiness, but of Christ's perfect inestimable worth. And while I still wrestle with my heavenly Father's acceptance of me, especially after I have sinned and confessed my sins, I am learning more and more to live like a child who is assured of an (undeserved) intimacy that nestles me near the heart of my Father and enables me to cry "**Abba! Father!**" Indeed, the Word of God declares that the antithesis of the bondage of fear is God's gracious gift of a spirit of adoption whereby we can draw close to the heart of God and confidently cry "**Abba! Father!**"

Abba, Father! We Approach Thee

"Abba, Father!" We approach Thee
In our Savior's precious Name;
We, Thy children, here assembled,
Now Thy promised blessing claim;
From our sins His blood hath washed us,
'Tis through Him our souls draw nigh,
And Thy Spirit, too, hath taught us,
"Abba, Father," thus to cry.
--James G Deck

Harold Hoehner also cautions us to have a reverential attitude when calling God '**Abba**', noting that while all...

Believers may address God with the endearing term (Abba) because He is "our Father," yet (we) should never use this term in the spirit of unsavory familiarity but with the full acknowledgement of His majesty. ([Darrell Bock, editor. Bible Knowledge Word Study - Acts through Ephesians. Page 179. 2006](#))

Warren Wiersbe commenting on Ps 76:7 asks...

What is this fear Asaph mentions? It's the fear of the Lord, that reverent respect and awe that we show to Him because of His greatness and power. We are God's children, and the Holy Spirit in our hearts says, "Abba, Father." We can pray, "Our Father, who art in heaven." We can draw close to God, and He will draw close to us. But remember that God is God and we are human beings. He is in heaven, and we are on earth. He is eternal, and someday we will be with Him in heaven. Meanwhile, our earthly existence is temporal. (Prayer, Praises and Promises)

Lee Strobel records an interview with NT expert Dr. Ben Witherington in which he discusses the apologetic (defense of the faith) value of Jesus' use of "**Abba, Father**"...

(Strobel asks) Jesus used the term "**Abba**" when he was relating to God. "What does that tell us about what He thought about Himself?" I asked.

'**Abba**' connotes intimacy in a relationship between a child and his father," Witherington explained. "Interestingly, it's also the term disciples used for a beloved teacher in early Judaism. But Jesus used it of God-and as far as I can tell, He and His followers were the only ones praying to God that way."

When I asked Witherington to expand on the importance of this, he said, "In the context in which Jesus operated, it was customary for Jews to work around having to say the name of God. His name was the most holy word you could speak, and they even feared mispronouncing it. If they were going to address God, they might say something like, 'The Holy One, blessed be He,' but they were not going to use His personal name."

"And '**Abba**' is a personal term," I said.

"Very personal," he replied. "It's the term of endearment in which a child would say to a parent, 'Father Dearest, what would you have me do?'"

However, I spotted an apparent inconsistency. "Wait a second," I interjected. "Praying '**Abba**' must not imply that Jesus thinks He's God, because He taught His disciples to use the same term in their own prayers, and they're not God."

"Actually," came Witherington's reply, "the significance of '**Abba**' is that **Jesus is the initiator of an intimate relationship that was previously unavailable. The question is, What kind of person can change the terms of relating to God? What kind of person can initiate a new covenantal relationship with God?**"

His distinction made sense to me. "So how significant do you consider Jesus' use of '**Abba**' to be?" I asked.

"Quite significant," he answered. **"It implies that Jesus had a degree of intimacy with God that is unlike anything in the Judaism of his day.** And listen, here's the kicker: Jesus is saying that only through having a relationship with Him does this kind of prayer language - this kind of 'Abba' relationship with God-become possible. That says volumes about how He regarded Himself." ([The Case for Christ- A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus- Lee Strobel](#))

C H Spurgeon

I have all in all to all eternity, when I can call God my Father. "Father!" He that can lisp that word upon his knees has uttered more eloquence than Demosthenes or Cicero ever knew! Abba, Father! He that can say that, has uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach! Abba, Father! There is heaven in the depth of that word! "Father!" There is all that I need! All that I can ask! All that my necessities can demand! All that my wishes can contrive! "Father!" ([Even So Father](#))

I have that which cherubim before the throne have never gained; I have relationship with God of the nearest and the dearest kind, and my spirit for her music hath this word, 'Abba, Father; Abba, Father.'" Spurgeon

That flower of glory consists perhaps, too, in eloquence. "Eloquence," say you, "how can that be?" I said the glory of the old nature might be eloquence, so with the new, but this is the eloquence — "Abba Father." This is an eloquence you can use now. It is one which when you cannot speak a word which might move an audience, shall still remain upon your tongue to move the courts of heaven. You shall be able to say, "Abba Father," in the very pangs of death, and waking from your beds of dust and silent clay, more eloquent still you shall cry, "Hallelujah," you shall join the eternal chorus, swell the divine symphony of cherubim and seraphim, and through eternity your glory shall never part away. And then, if wisdom be glory, your wisdom, the wisdom which you inherit in the new nature, which is none other than Christ's who is made of God unto us, wisdom shall never fade, in fact it shall grow, for there you shall know even as you are known. While here you see through a glass darkly, there you shall see face to face. You sip the brook to-day, you shall bathe in the ocean tomorrow; you see afar off now, you shall lie in the arms of wisdom by-and-bye; for the glory of the Spirit never dies, but throughout eternity expanding, enlarging, blazing, gloryfying itself through God, it shall go on never, never to fail. Brethren, whatever it may be which you are expecting as the glory of your new nature, you have not yet an idea of what it will be. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." But though he hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, yet, I fear we have not fully learned them. However, we will say of this glory, whatever it may be, it is incorruptible, undefiled, and it fadeth not away. The only question we have to ask, and with that we wish, is — are we born again? Brethren, it is impossible for you to possess the existence of the new life without the new birth, and the glory of the new birth you cannot know without the new heart. I say — are you born again? Do not stand up and say, "I am a Churchman, I was baptized and confirmed." That you may be, and yet not be born again. Do not say, "I am a Baptist, I have professed my faith and was immersed." That you may be, and not be born again Do not any, "I am of Christian parents." That you may be, and yet be an heir of wrath, even as others. Are you born again be Oh! souls, may God the Holy Ghost reveal Christ to you, and when you come to see Christ with the tearful eyes of a penitential faith, then be it known unto you that you are born again and that you have passed from death unto life, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." God help you to believe! ([THE NEW NATURE](#))

A W Tozer

By the new birth, He gives some of His own delightful, divine nature to the sinner (2Pe 1:4). And the sinner looks up and says, **"Abba, Father"** (Romans 8:15, Galatians 4:6) for the first time in his or her life. Now he or she is converted. (The Attributes of God – Volume 1: A Journey into the Father's Heart)

[Arise, My Soul, Arise](#)

My God is reconciled; His pardoning voice I hear;

He owns me for His child; I can no longer fear:

With confidence I now draw nigh,

With confidence I now draw nigh,

And "Father, Abba, Father," cry.

--Charles Wesley

Father ([3962](#)) (**pater** [see [Word Study](#)]) gives us English words like paternity, paternal) was the title used most often by Jesus to address God (There are some 156 such uses in John eg, Jn 5:18). Jesus refers to God as **"Father"** 15x in the Sermon on the

Mount.

Hughes observes that...

It is significant that the first word to fall from the prodigal son's lips when he returned home was "Father": "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you" (Lk 15:21). And those words were followed by forgiveness. The more deep-seated our sense of God's Fatherhood, the deeper will be our sense of forgiveness—the wholeness that comes from being loved and being forgiven. (Ibid)

Although the OT referred to God as "Father", the first century Jews did not refer to Him by this intimate name. The pious Jew sensed a great gap between himself and Jehovah and would not dare address Him as, Abba, Father. Clearly, Jesus' instruction on prayer (Mt 6:9) and His own prayer in His most desperate hour (Mk 14:36), indicates the intimate bond between Father and Son and presented the pattern for all who believe in Him to pray with the same intimacy with which He addressed His Father! Amazing grace indeed! Paul echoed this great truth that believers can now cry out "Abba! Father!" (we cry in Ro 8:15, the Spirit in us cries in Gal 4:6). As **H C G Moule** said "the knowledge of the Father as our Father because the Father of the Son is among the greatest treasures of grace."

In describing the NT use of "Father" as it refers to God, the Net Bible notes that...

God is addressed in terms of intimacy (Father). The original Semitic term here was probably Abba... (which) is not the exact equivalent of "daddy" (as is sometimes popularly suggested), but it does suggest a close, familial relationship. ([The NET Bible](#))

J. I. Packer (originally writing in Evangelical Magazine) considers one's grasp of God's Fatherhood and adoption as His child as of essential importance in one's spiritual life explaining that...

If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. "Father" is the Christian name for God. ([Packer, J: Knowing God](#))

As **Vance Havner** writes...

As children of God we receive the unspeakably wonderful right to at any time boldly approach God's throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need (Heb 4:16). We are pitied (Ps 103:13), protected, provided for and "paddled" (chastened, disciplined, Heb 12:5-11) by God as our Father.

Warren Wiersbe notes that...

No baby is born speaking. That would be a remarkable thing if a child could instantly speak. But when you were born into God's family, even though you were only one second old in the Lord, you were adopted and had the privilege of speaking—speaking to God in prayer, in praise, and in worship and speaking for God in witness. (Key Words of the Christian Life)

J C Ryle writes that ...

a habit of prayer is one of the surest marks of a true Christian. All the children of God on earth are alike in this respect. From the moment there is any life and reality about their religion, they pray. Just as the first sign of the life of an infant when born into the world is the act of breathing, so the first act of men and women when they are born again is praying. This is one of the common marks of all the elect of God, "They cry unto him day and night." Luke . The Holy Spirit who makes them new creatures, works in them a feeling of adoption, and makes the cry, "**Abba, Father.**" (Ro 8:15, Gal 4:6) . The Lord Jesus, when He quickens (gives life to) them, gives them a voice and a tongue, and says to them, "Be dumb no more." God has no dumb children. It is as much a part of their new nature to pray, as it is of a child to cry. They see their need of mercy and grace. They feel their emptiness and weakness. They cannot do other wise than they do. They must pray. (A Call To Prayer)

The 18th Century Evangelist **George Whitfield** wrote...

O that all that hear me would be persuaded to bow their knee, and their hearts, as soon as they go home: but alas, how many of our Christians go to God, day by day, and call him, Father, which is but mocking of God, when the devil is their father. **None have a right to call him father, but those who have received the spirit**

of adoption, whereby they have a right to call him, "Abba, Father." Could the brute beasts speak, they might call God father as well as some of you; for he is their Creator to whom they owe their being; but this will not entitle you to call God father, in a spiritual sense; no, you must be born again of God; however you may flatter yourselves, you must have an inward principle wrought in your hearts by faith. This you must experience, this, this you must feel before you are Christians indeed.

As **Andrew Bonar** said...

If the Father has the kingdom ready for us, he will take care of us on the way.

How incredible that we who are in Christ can call God "**Abba, Father**" for as **William Jenkyn's** reminds us...

Our father was Adam, our grandfather dust, our great-grandfather nothing.

Spurgeon

And what a wonderful power we have when we can truly say, "Abba! Father! "We shall have power with God in our times of greatest weakness if we can cry, "Abba! Father! "I can never forget a certain illness, when I had been racked with pain, and brought very low with heaviness of spirit through the nature of the complaint from which I was suffering, and I felt driven almost to despair, one night, until I laid hold of God, in an agony of prayer, and pleaded with him something like this, "If my child were in such anguish as I am in, I would listen to him, and relieve him if I could. Thou art my Father, and I am, thy child, then wilt thou not treat me like a child?" Almost at the very moment when I presented that plea before God, my pain ceased, and I fell into a sweet slumber, from which I woke up with "Abba! Father!" on my lip and in my heart. I believe that this is an invincible plea, because, when God calls himself our Father, he means it. There are some fathers, in this world, who do not act at all as fathers should; shame upon them; but that will never be said of our Heavenly Father. He is a true Father, and he has bowels of compassion towards his children, and he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men; and when we know how to appeal to his Fatherhood, we shall prevail with him. ([POWER WITH GOD](#))

Spurgeon writes...

A Father! There is music in that word, but not to a fatherless child—to him it is full of sorrowful memories. Those who have never lost a father can scarcely know how precious a relation a father is. A father who is a father indeed, is very dear! Do we not remember how we climbed his knee? Do we not recollect the kisses we imprinted on his cheeks? Do we not recall to-day with gratitude the chidings of his wisdom and the gentle encouragements of his affection? We owe all! Who shall tell how much we owe to our fathers according to the flesh, and when they are taken from us we lament their loss, and feel that a great gap is made in our family circle.

Listen, then, to these words, "Our Father, Who is in heaven." Consider the grace contained in the Lord's deigning to take us into the relationship of children, and giving us with the relationship the nature and the spirit of children, so that we say, "Abba, Father." Did you ever lie in bed with your limbs vexed with sore pains, and cry, "Father, pity thy child"? Did you ever look into the face of death, and as you thought you were about to depart, cry, "My Father, help me; uphold me with thy gracious hand, and bear me through the stream of death"? It is at such times that we realize the glory of the Fatherhood of God, and in our feebleness learn to cling to the divine strength, and catch at the divine love. (Flashes of Thought)

"Abba, Father." You will find it a stronghold in the day of trial to plead your adoption. You have no rights as a subject, you have forfeited them by your treason; but nothing can forfeit a child's right to a father's protection. Be not afraid to say, "My Father, hear my cry." (Morning and evening)

THE THREE NT USES OF ABBA

(1) Mark 14:36 And He was saying, "**Abba! Father!** All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will."

Phillips paraphrase = "Father, my Father"

Way paraphrase = "My Father, my own dear Father."

Comment: Jesus Himself use of **Abba** in addressing God was without parallel in the whole of Jewish literature. The explanation by some early Church fathers (Chrysostom, Theodore, Theodoret) was that **Abba**

was the word used by a young child addressing his father. It was an everyday family word, which no one had ventured to use in addressing God. Jesus introduces "Abba" as a quite natural way to address His heavenly Father, manifesting a childlike, trustful, and intimate way a little child would address his father. **As an aside, notice that those who are privileged to cry "Abba" should be willing to do "Abba's" will!**

And so in intense agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Lk 22:44, Mt 26:38), Jesus' cried "**Abba! Father!**" as He surrendered His will to His Father's will (The Cross) paving the way for all His brethren to cry out as adopted sons "**Abba! Father!**" While the text dealing with Jesus' Gethsemane experience does not specifically mention the Holy Spirit, we know from other passages that Jesus was giving us an example of the perfect Man (our example to follow - 1Cor 11:1, 1Pe 2:21, 1Jn 2:6), doing so not by relying on His divine prerogatives or His own power (although He never ceased being fully God), but by yielding to the filling and leading of the Holy Spirit (Lk 4:1, Mt 4:1). We see this same dependence on the Holy Spirit continuing throughout His earthly ministry (cp Lk 4:14, Jn 1:32, Acts 10:37, 38) and even after He was resurrected (Acts 1:2). And so just as the Holy Spirit led Jesus in His moment of deepest need, to cry out "**Abba! Father!**" the same Spirit leads Jesus' brethren to utter the same cry "**Abba! Father!**" (see [Ro 8:15](#)) ([See also note by Nigel Turner](#))

Spurgeon: Blessed prayer! Its sweet resignation to the Father's will should be an example to every tried child of God.

Spurgeon: In Gethsemane, when the bloody sweat fell fast upon the ground, his bitterest cry commenced with, "My Father," asking that if it were possible the cup of gall might pass from him; he pleaded with the Lord as his Father, even as he over and over again had called him on that dark and doleful night. Here, again, in this, the first of his seven expiring cries, it is "Father." O that the Spirit that makes us cry, "Abba, Father," may never cease his operations! May we never be brought into spiritual bondage by the suggestion, "If thou be the Son of God;" or if the tempter should so assail us, may we triumph as Jesus did in the hungry wilderness. May the Spirit which crieth, "Abba, Father," repel each unbelieving fear. When we are chastened, as we must be (for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not?) may we be in loving subjection to the Father of our spirits, and live; but never may we become captives to the spirit of bondage, so as to doubt the love of our gracious Father, or our share in his adoption. ([THE FIRST CRY FROM THE CROSS](#))

Wilkins: But by calling his disciples to share in the kingdom of heaven, they now have entered into a relationship with his Father as well. Moreover, God is "our Father," expressing the relationship we have with one another as disciples and with Jesus as our brother, and the corporate intimacy we have with the same Father. (The NIV Application Commentary)

Woodrow Kroll: Abba is an Aramaic word that was used by Jews as a term of endearment, a familiar term like Papa, which children might use in addressing their father. The idea of God being a father was extremely foreign to Jewish thinking in the Old Testament. But being adopted as sons and daughters of the Most High God has given us a special, intimate, and unique relationship with Him. "The same word is used here that Christ Himself used in addressing His heavenly Father—'Abba'—in the Garden of Gethsemane according to Mark 14:36. Because we are in Him, we may use the very word He used." We may not defame Him nor disrespect Him, but we can call God "Daddy," and that's something special. Only children can do that. (Romans-Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary)

Amy Carmichael: Shall I, I pray Thee, change thy will my Father Until it be according unto mine? But no Lord, no, that never shall be, rather I pray thee blend my human will with thine.

ROMANS 8:15

(2) Romans 8:15-note For (term of explanation - a rich reward awaits you when you pause to ponder the >7000 uses of "**for**" in Scripture, asking "**What is being explained?**" - see Ro 8:14 where the immediate context answers this question) you have not (Greek = ou = absolute negation!) received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again (cf 2Ti 1:7KJV-note), but (term of contrast = striking change of direction) you have received a spirit of **adoption** as sons by which we cry out (present tense = continually) , "**Abba! Father!**" (Ro 8:16-note) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

THE NEW COVENANT INTRODUCES A WONDERFUL, GLORIOUS CONTRAST

Spirit of slavery

Fear
of a slave

Barclay's translation of Ro 8:14-16: For all who are guided by the Spirit of God, these, and only these, are the children of God. For you did not receive a state whose dominating condition is slavery so that you might relapse into fear; but you received a state whose dominating characteristic is adoption, in which we cry, "Abba! Father!" The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Phillips: Nor are you meant to relapse into the old slavish attitude of fear - you have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can say with a full heart, "Father, my Father".

Comment: Abba, Father means "Dear Father the Father", reminding us of a small child who seldom cries "Daddy" just one time, but more often cries out "Daddy! Daddy!" (cf repetition Ps 8:1) As shown in the table above, the intimacy of a son of salvation with the Father is set in the stark contrast to the one who is still the slave of sin. One proof that we are in Christ and are truly adopted sons of God comes from the instinctive cry "Abba! Father!" the Spirit stimulates in our heart. Indeed, fallen man's deepest need is to be allowed to cry out to God as "Father!" a cry which must be supernatural, a work of the Holy Spirit in our spiritually circumcised hearts. When we are supernaturally impelled to cry "Abba!" we know we are adopted into the family of God.

Piper: The Spirit is poured out into our hearts to confirm and make real our adoption. How does he do that according to Ro 8:15? He does it by replacing the fear of a slave toward a master with the love of a son toward a father. "You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" He is contrasting the fear of a slave with the affection of a son. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to change our slavish fears toward God into confident, happy, peaceful affection for God as our Father.

Stephen Charnock: Adoption gives us the privilege of sons, regeneration the nature of sons.

Martin Luther: The Law produces a spirit of fear; a servile, Cain-like spirit. But grace produces a free, filial, Abel-like disposition, through Christ the seed of Abraham.

Thomas Watson: Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise... God has made his children, by adoption, nearer to himself than the angels. The angels are the friends of Christ; believers are his members... Since God has a Son of his own, and such a Son, how wonderful God's love in adopting us! We needed a Father, but He did not need sons

John MacArthur: The Spirit's testimony draws believers into communion with God, as the expression "Abba! Father!" in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6 indicates. That term of intimacy connotes a Spirit-generated petition of praise and worship offered to the Father. (2 Peter and Jude)

A J Panning: Abba is simply the Aramaic word for "father." It is the type of address a child would use to go up to a parent and ask for something. Children don't stop and wonder whether this would be a convenient time to interrupt what their parents are doing. No, they confidently ask for whatever they need whenever they want it. That is the kind of confidence the Holy Spirit instills in believers, so that they approach God "as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father," to use Luther's comparison (The Lord's Prayer, "The Address"). (Romans. The People's Bible).

Spurgeon: To be in bondage under the law, to be afraid of being cast away by God, and visited with destruction on account of sin after we have trusted in Jesus, — this is not the work of the Spirit of God in believers, but the offspring of unbelief or ignorance of the grace of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

William Newell: the Spirit indwelling witnesses, enabling us, moving us, to cry, "Abba, Father." There is life before this, just as the new-born babe has life and breath before it forms a syllable. It is significant that the Spirit indwelling is the power whereby we cry, **Abba, Father,**—by His enlightenment. His encouragement, His energy. The operations of a man's mind either in philosophy or in science constitute an eternal quest for certainty. The conclusions of philosophy are based upon theories and hypotheses and are always being challenged and perpetually overthrown by succeeding new schemes of philosophy. And even the dearest discoveries of science await new explanations—of the very constitution of the universe they are invented in. But with the child of God—the born-again family, there is no such uncertainty! A child of God knows. And the blessed Holy Spirit, by whose inscrutable power he was born again, keeps forever witnessing with his consciousness,—and that through no processes of his mind, but directly, that he is a born-one of God. This is most natural and could not be otherwise. Children in an earthly family grow up together as a family, their parents addressing them as children, their brothers and sisters knowing them to be such. It is the most

beautiful thing in the natural world! ([Romans Verse-by-Verse](#))

C. S. Lewis: The Son of God became a man ("Son of Man") to enable men to become the sons of God.

Ray Pritchard: This (that we can cry out "Abba! Father!") is truly good news. You don't have to scream at God to get his attention. You simply say, "Daddy," and he hears your voice. You whisper his name in the darkness and he comes to your aid. Every father understands this principle. I can be in a room filled with people and a welter of voices. But let one of my sons say "Daddy," and somehow I will hear his voice. I don't know how that happens, but it does. **A father knows when his children are speaking to him. The same is true with our heavenly Father. He hears the faintest cry of his children.** ([Life in the Spirit](#))

Donald Barnhouse: God does not want His children to be in fear. When Jesus Christ died the sword of judgment was forever sheathed in His body, and not even God Himself can draw it forth to strike a man who has put his trust in the Savior. Therefore, we have not been given the spirit of bondage which would inspire fear within our hearts, but we have received the Holy Spirit of adoption, by virtue of which we cry, "**Abba, Father.**" The Christian is never to tremble with fear or to be tormented with anxiety. On the contrary, God's wrath having been stilled forever, and we having been begotten to divine sonship and adopted into an official position in the family of God, we may turn to our Heavenly Father with utter calmness, and with the full confidence that He cannot turn us away. All this is involved in our position. All this is guaranteed in our sonship...

The witness of the Holy Spirit is that which draws us into the center of the experience of Jesus Christ, makes us conscious of our union with Him in His eternal plan for us, climaxing in our union with Him in His death and resurrection. This is that which sets the heart in such rejoicing with the God who did all of this, that we joyfully cry, "**Abba, Father.**" (God's Heirs: Romans 8:1–39)

Spurgeon: Oh, blessed, blessed state of heart to feel that now we are born into the family of God, and that the choice word which no slave might ever pronounce may now be pronounced by us, "Abba"! It is a child's word, such as a little child utters when first he opens his mouth to speak, and it runs the same both backwards and forwards,—AB-BA. Oh to have a childlike spirit that, in whatever state of heart I am, I may still be able to say, in the accents even of spiritual infancy, "Abba, Father"!

Ye did receive it once (the spirit of slavery), and it was a great blessing to you. This came of the law, and the law brought you under bondage through a sense of sin, and that made you first cry for liberty, and then made you accept the liberating Saviour; but you have not received that spirit of bondage again to fear.

We who believe in Jesus are all children of God, and we dare to use that name which only children might use, "Abba;" and we dare use it even in the presence of God, and to say to him, "Abba, Father." We cannot help doing it, because the spirit of adoption must have its own mode of speech; and its chosen way of speaking is to appeal to the great God by this name, "Abba, Father." ([THE PEARL OF PATIENCE](#))

Spurgeon: Is God your Father? Have you learnt to trust him as his children trust him, and to love him as his children love him? Do you depend wholly upon him? Do you seek to submit yourself entirely to his will, and to walk in his way? For, if you are not a child of God at all, certainly you are not one of his firstborn. (["THE CHURCH OF THE FIRST-BORN"](#))

Spurgeon: This (to cry "Abba! Father!") is the highest form of confidence that can be thought of,—that a child of God should be able, even when he is forced to cry, to cry nothing less than, "Abba, Father." At his lowest, when he is full of sorrow and grief, even in his cryings and lamentings, he sticks to "Abba, Father." This is a joyous confidence indeed! Oh, that God may give it to you, dearly beloved, to the very full! Thus it is clear that the Spirit of adoption is a spirit of liberty, and a spirit of confidence. As a child is sure that its father will love him, feed him, clothe him, teach him, and do all that is good for him, so are we sure that "No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly;" but he will make all things to "work together for good to them that love God."

The spirit of bondage made us fear, but the Spirit of adoption gives us full assurance. That fear which distrusts God—that fear which doubts whether he will remain a loving and merciful God—that fear which makes us think that all his love will come to an end—that is gone, for we cry, "Abba, Father," and that cry is the death of doubting and fearing. We sing to brave music, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him."

The Spirit of adoption, moreover, is a spirit of gratitude Oh, that ever the Lord should put me among the children! Why should he do this? He did not want for children that he should adopt me. The First-born alone

was enough to fill the Father's heart throughout eternity. And yet the Lord puts us among the children. Blessed be his name for ever and ever! "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!"

The Spirit of adoption is a spirit of child-likeness. It is pretty, though sometimes sad, to see how children imitate their parents. How much the little man is like his father! Have you not noticed it? Do you not like to see it, too? You know you do. Ay, and when God gives the Spirit of adoption, there begins in us, poor fallen creatures as we are, some little likeness to himself; and that will grow to his perfect image. We cannot become God; but we have the privilege and the power to become the sons of God. "Even to as many as believe on his name" does Jesus give this privilege; and therefore we grow up into him in all things, who is our Head, and at the same time the pattern and mirror of what all the children of God are to be.

Thus, dear friends, let us see with great joy that we have not received again the spirit of bondage. We shall not receive it any more. The Spirit of God will never come to us in that form again, for now we have been washed in the blood, we have been taken away from being heirs of wrath even as others, we have been placed in the family of the Most High, and we feel the Spirit of adoption within us, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father..."

Whenever the Spirit of adoption enters into a man it sets him praying. He cannot help it. He does not wish to help it.

"Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death:
He enters heaven with prayer."

And this praying of the true believer who has the Spirit of adoption is very earnest praying, for it takes the form of crying. He does not say, "Abba, Father." Anybody can say those words. But he cries, "Abba, Father." Nobody can cry, "Abba, Father," but by the Holy Ghost. When those two words, "Abba, Father," are set to the music of a child's cry, there is more power in them than in all the orations of Demosthenes and Cicero. They are such heavenly sounds as only the twice-born, the true aristocracy of God, can ever utter, "Abba, Father:" they even move the heart of the Eternal.

But it is also very natural praying: for a child to say, "Father," is according to the fitness of things. It is not necessary to send your boys to a Board School to teach them to do that. They cry "Father," soon and often. So, when we are born again, "Our Father, which art in heaven," is a prayer that is never forced upon us: it rises up naturally within the new-born nature; and because we are born again we cry, "Abba, Father." When we have lost our Father for awhile, we cry after him in the dark. When he takes the rod to us we cry; but we cry no otherwise than this—"Abba, Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

It seems to me to be not only an earnest cry and a natural cry, but a very appealing cry. It touches your heart when your child says, "Don't hurt me, father. Dear father, by your love to me, forgive me." True prayer pleads the fatherhood of God—"My father, my father, I am no stranger; I am no foe, I am thy own dear and well-beloved child. Therefore, like as a father pitieth his children, have thou pity upon me." The Lord never turns a deaf ear to such pleadings. He says, "I do earnestly remember him still," and in love he checks his hand.

And what a familiar word it is—"Abba, Father"! They say that slaves were never allowed to call their masters "abba." That was a word for free-born children only: no man can speak with God as God's children may. I have heard critics say sometimes of our prayers, "How familiar that man is with God"; and one adds, "I do not like such boldness." No, you slaves; of course, you cannot speak with God as a child can; and it would not be right that you should! It befits you to fear, and crouch, and, like miserable sinners, to keep yourselves a long way off from God. Distance is the slave's place; only the child may draw near. But if you are children, then you may say, "Lord, thou hast had mercy upon me, miserable sinner as I was; and thou hast cleansed me, and I am thine; therefore deal with me according to the riches of thy grace. My soul delighteth herself in thee, for thou art my God, and my exceeding joy." Who but a true-born child of God can understand that word—"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he will give thee the desires of thine heart."

I do not know any more delightful expression towards God than to say to him, "Abba, Father." It is as much as to say—"My heart knows that thou art my Father. I am as sure of it as that I am the child of my earthly father; and I am more sure that thou wouldest deal tenderly with me than that my father would." Paul hints at this when he reminds us that our fathers, verily, chastened us after their own pleasure, but the Lord always chastens us for our profit. The heavenly Father's heart is never angry so as to smite in wrath; but in pity, and gentleness, and tenderness, he afflicts his sons and daughters. "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me." See

what a blessed state this is to be brought into, to be made children of God, and then in our prayers to be praying, not like serfs and servants, but as children who cry, "Abba, Father." ([The Spirit of Bondage and Adoption - Ro 8:15-16](#))

David Guzik: It is easy for us to see Jesus relating to the Father with this joyful confidence, but we may see ourselves as disqualified for it. However, remember that we are in Christ - we have the privilege of relating to the Father even as Jesus Christ does.

i. In the Roman world of the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature. (Bruce)

ii. Under Roman adoption, the life and standing of the adopted child changed completely. The adopted son lost all rights in his old family and gained all new rights in his new family; the old life of the adopted son was completely wiped out, with all debts being canceled, with nothing from his past counting against him any more. ([Notes](#))

John Piper: The Spirit brings about a response in our hearts to the love of God that cries out, "Abba! Father!" The witness of the Holy Spirit that you are a child of God is not a testimony to a neutral heart with no affection for God's fatherly love so that your neutral heart can draw the logical conclusion that it is a child of God and then try to muster up some appropriate affections. That is not the picture. No. The witness of the Holy Spirit that you are a child of God is the creation in you of affections for God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit **IS** the cry, "Abba! Father!"

And the reason Paul uses the word "cry" and the Aramaic word "Abba" is because both of them point to deep, affectionate, personal, authentic experience of God's fatherly love. He didn't say that the testimony of the Spirit was that we affirm doctrinally that God is father. The devil knows that doctrine. Doctrinal affirmations, as important as they are, don't make children. What he said was that the testimony of the Spirit that we are God's children is that from our hearts there rises an irrepressible cry – a cry, not a mere statement, a cry: "Abba! Father!"

We don't infer **logically** the fatherhood of God from the testimony of the Spirit. We enjoy **emotionally** the Fatherhood of God by the testimony of the Spirit. The testimony of the Spirit is not a **premise** from which we deduce that we are children of God; it is a **power** by which we delight in being the children of God.

Don't Wait for a Whisper – Look to Jesus! If you want to know that you are a child of God, you don't put your ear to the Holy Spirit and wait for a whisper; put your ear to the gospel and your eye to the cross of Christ and you pray that the Holy Spirit would enable you to see it and savor it for what it really is. Romans 5:8, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

The testimony of the Spirit is that when we look at cross we cry, "Jesus, you are my Lord!" (1 Corinthians 12:3), and "God, you are my Father!" So look to Christ! Look to Christ! ([The Spirit-Led Are the Sons of God](#))

James Smith: Thus the Father decreed our adoption, the Son came to redeem us from bondage, and the Holy Spirit takes possession of our hearts, teaching us to call God, "Father." ([The Sons of God](#))

John Piper: "You have received a spirit of adoption as sons **by which** we cry out, "Abba! Father!" Notice the words "**by which**." This is the work of the Holy Spirit. When believers in Jesus find rising in our hearts the cry, "Abba! Father!" this is the testimony of the Spirit that we are the children of God.

Let's see this in relationship to 1 Corinthians 12:3. There Paul says, "No one speaking by the Spirit of God says, 'Jesus is accursed'; and no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." In other words, the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit when we cry, "**Jesus is Lord!**" But that is not the only cry the Spirit prompts in our hearts.

Another is, "**Abba! Father!**" In other words, the Spirit produces two profound changes in us toward God: One is a humble demeanor of submission: Jesus, the Son of God, is my Lord, my Master; I am his subject; he is my ruler, my sovereign. **And the other is the joyful, bold, childlike demeanor of confidence: God is my Father.**

Jesus is my Lord! God is my Father! That is the humble, hope-filled cry of the Spirit-indwelt Christian. And out of this humble confidence we are led "by the Spirit" to make war on our sin and put to death all that does not exalt our Lord and honor our Father. ([Children, Heirs, and Fellow Sufferers - Desiring God](#))

Spurgeon: One work of the Spirit of God is to create in believers the spirit of ADOPTION. "Because ye are

sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, whereby ye cry, Abba, Father!" "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" We are regenerated, by the Holy Spirit, and so receive the nature of children; and that nature, which is given by him, he continually prompts, and excites, and develops, and matures; so that we receive day by day more and more of the childlike spirit. Now, beloved, this may not seem to you to be of very great importance at first sight; but it is so; for the church is never happy except as all her members walk as dear children towards God. Sometimes the spirit of slaves creeps over us: we begin to talk of the service of God as though it were heavy and burdensome, and are discontented if we do not receive present wages and visible success, just as servants do when they are not suited; but the spirit of adoption works for love, without any hope of reward, and it is satisfied with the sweet fact of being in the Father's house, and doing the Father's will. This spirit gives peace, rest, joy, boldness, and holy familiarity with God. A man who never received the spirit of a child towards God does not know the bliss of the Christian life; he misses its flower, its savor, its excellence, and I should not wonder if the service of Christ should be a weariness to him because he has never yet got to the sweet things, and does not enjoy the green pastures, wherein the Good Shepherd makes his sheep to feed and to lie down. But when the Spirit of God makes us feel that we are sons, and we live in the house of God to go no more out for ever, then the service of God is sweet and easy, and we accept the delay of apparent success as a part of the trial we are called to bear. ([Our Urgent Need of the Holy Spirit](#))

Wiersbe: We're the children of God, and as such we need to speak to our Father as well as listen to what He says. In fact, the Christian life begins with the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts and giving us the assurance of salvation by saying, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6), and we echo those words in our own witness (see Rom. 8:15). (Prayer 101)

[God Our Father, We Adore Thee](#)

God, our Father, we adore Thee! We, Thy children, bless Thy Name!
Chosen in the Christ before Thee, we are "holy without blame."
We adore Thee! We adore Thee! Abba's praises we proclaim!
We adore Thee! We adore Thee! Abba's praises we proclaim!
- George W Frazer

GALATIANS 4:6

(3) Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son (the One Who first cried "Abba") into our hearts, crying, "**Abba! Father!**" (Observe the context, especially Gal 4:7 for the **therefore** = a term of conclusion, which begs the question "**What is Paul's conclusion?**")

Comment: Note the preceding context where Paul writes "But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that (purpose for Jesus' incarnation) He might redeem (exagorazo - pay the ransom price to set a slave free) those who were under (subject to) the Law (all who are not born again), that we might receive the **adoption** as sons." (Gal 4:4, 5) When you and I were born again, God sent His Spirit to permanently indwell us. Note that the Name, **Spirit of His Son**, is used only here in the NT. And so just as the Son had the right to cry out "Abba! Father!" (Mk 14:36), so we now have the Spirit of the Son, Who cries Abba! Father, and impels us to cry out Abba! Father! (Ro 8:15). In short, Jesus became the "Son of Man" in order that we might become sons of God, those who could now cry out "Dear Father!" Paul concludes "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." (Gal 4:7)

In the Greek world a slave had no freedom. Adoption was one way of giving freedom to a slave. If a slave was adopted into the family of his master and made a son, he received his freedom. To move from slavery to sonship meant to move from a life of bondage to a life of liberty. When we were spiritually adopted by God His was sent to dwell intimately in us. He is now our Abba, our "Dearest Father" in a way no human parent can be. Human parents can adopt children and love them as much as they do their natural children, but they can't impart their nature to their adopted child. Yet that is exactly what God has done for his adopted sons and daughters! We have become partakers "of the divine nature" (2Peter 1:4) now that the Spirit of His Son dwells in us. And one of the rights we now have as sons is to call God our "Abba," our dear Father, just as His Son did in Gethsemane!

Regarding **adoption**, notice that the Greek word **huiothesia** is not so much a word of *relationship* as of *position*. In **regeneration** a Christian receives the nature of a child of God; in **adoption** he receives the position of a son of God. Every Christian obtains the place of a child and the right to be called a son the

moment he believes (Gal 3:25,26, 4:6, 1Jn 3:1,2). The indwelling Spirit gives the realization of this in the Christian's present experience (Gal 4:6) but the full manifestation of our sonship awaits our future bodily resurrection and change, Paul writing that "we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit (Who now enables us to "cry out 'Abba! Father!'", even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body." (the redemption of the body" (Ro 8:23). And so while we are fully sons now, we will not receive the full inheritance of our adopted sonship until that future day when we redemption is consummated, we are glorified and become like the Beloved Son, for "when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." (1Jn 3:2) Hallelujah! Maranatha! Amen!

Behold What Wondrous Grace

If in my Father's love
I share a filial part,
Send down Thy Spirit like a dove,
To rest upon my heart.

We would no longer lie
Like slaves beneath the throne;
My faith shall Abba, Father, cry,
And thou the kindred own.
-Isaac Watts

Baker NT Commentary: God sent his Son to redeem men from every type of spiritual slavery. He changed slaves into sons. Moreover, he sent the Spirit into their hearts in order that those who were sons in position might also be sons in disposition, for adoption implies transformation. Deliverance means freedom of access, so that the ransomed one cries out, "Abba!" ("Father!").

F F Bruce: The Spirit is here called the Spirit of God's Son, 'crying "Abba, Father!" ' The fact that Christians call God 'Abba', using the same word as Jesus used, is a token that they are indwelt by the same Spirit as indwelt Him; 'Abba', the *ipsissima vox Iesu* (on his own lips), is the voice of the Spirit of Jesus (on the lips of His people)... Two sure signs of the indwelling Spirit, for Paul, are the spontaneous invocation of God as 'Abba' and the spontaneous acknowledgement of Jesus as **kurios** or 'Lord' (1Cor 12:3). ([The Epistle to the Galatians - F. F. Bruce](#))

John MacArthur: The Spirit offers subjective ministry that confirms the objective truth of Scripture... One of the ministries of the Spirit to the sons of God is to enable them with full confidence to cry out to Him, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit offers subjective ministry that confirms the objective truth of Scripture. Declaring that same message to believers at Rome, Paul wrote, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Ro 8:14–16)... Abba is a diminutive of the Aramaic word for father. It was a term of endearment used by young children of their fathers and could be translated "daddy" or "papa." The Holy Spirit brings us into a personal, intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, whom we may approach at any time and under any circumstance, knowing that He always hears us and lovingly cares for us, because we are truly His own. "In Him, you also," Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13–14). The fact that a believer has an intimate relationship with God, and can confidently cry out to Him as Father, is beautiful and magnificent proof of sonship. Those who have the status of divine sonship through the Son also have the essence and the assurance of it through the Spirit, who draws them into intimate communion with their heavenly Father. ([MacArthur, J. Galatians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Spurgeon: While the Jewish believers, like children, were under the law, they did not have such direct access to the Father as we have. They could not enter into such close fellowship with God as now we can. We who are the sons of God, really born into his family, feel within us a something that makes us call God, "Father," not only in prayer, saying, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" but, inwardly, when we are not in the attitude of prayer, our hearts keep on crying, "Father, Father." The Jew may say, "Abba, and the word is very sweet; but we cry, "Father," and it means the same thing. ([Persecuted But Not Forsaken - scroll toward bottom for brief expositions on Galatians 4](#))

Spurgeon: Here is our true position, we are moved by the Spirit to claim our adoption, and we no more live in

bondage to the law. Many even among Christians are afraid of being too sure of their sonship, lest they should be presumptuous; this is very dishonoring to their heavenly Father.

Wiersbe: There is a contrast here between being a servant and being a son. The word son refers to a mature son, not just a little baby. When you are a child, you are under all kinds of rules and regulations. "Don't do this, and don't do that. Don't touch this, and don't go there." Sad to say, many Christians live like this; they live a life of legalistic bondage. Paul informs us that the Holy Spirit who has come into our lives is the Spirit of adoption. We have not received "a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear" (Rom. 8:15). I suppose these two words best describe little children—fear and bondage. They are always afraid of something, and they are in bondage—they must always obey others. They are under the control of parents and teachers. You and I, as God's adopted children, have freedom from the Law. This does not mean we are lawless; it does mean that our relationship to our Father is one of love and not of bondage. We have freedom; we are able to walk. (Key Words of the Christian Life)

John MacArthur: The witness of... assurance (**Ed:** that one is genuinely born again and heaven bound) entails the Holy Spirit's working in believers' conscience and emotions so that they feel the joy of their forgiveness and long to be in God's presence, like children with a beloved father. (1, 2, 3 John : MacArthur NT Commentary)

John MacArthur: The Holy Spirit brings us into a personal, intimate relationship with our heavenly Father, whom we may approach at any time and under any circumstance, knowing that He always hears us and lovingly cares for us, because we are truly His own."

James Smith (1860): When that Spirit comes, he shows us the vastness and value of the privilege, stirs up in us a burning desire to enjoy it, and also persuades of the fact that it is ours, and enables us to cry, "Abba, Father." If therefore we come to God, through Jesus, as to a Father, and seek his favor, and to have his love shed abroad in our hearts — we are the children of God. His adopted children, and this grace of adoption, is the greatest privilege we can enjoy below. ([The Glorious Liberty](#))

Norman Bartlett: As Christians, instead of shrinking from GOD in dread, we now cling to Him in love and trust; and yet how many Christians fail to enter into the full blessedness of their filial bonds with GOD! How an earthly parent sorrows when his child is afraid of him for some reason or other - probably without any real foundation! And who shall say that our FATHER in Heaven does not grieve when His children fail to trust Him as they ought? "Abba" was the Aramaic word for father. Used with "FATHER" in this way, it is suggestive of a tender and joyous response to GOD on the part of a child of His. If we could but realize more fully how our heavenly FATHER loves us, our hearts could not contain the love and joy we should find in Him. The ecstasy experienced by an earthly father when his little one first cries, "Daddy!" is a faint but touching picture of the happiness that must flood the heart of GOD when a new-born babe in CHRIST first prays, "Dear FATHER."

John MacArthur summarizes how the Holy Spirit bears witness that we are God's children...

- (1) Illuminating Scripture so you can understand it. (1Cor 2:10ff)
- (2) The second way the Spirit bears witness is through salvation. (1Jn 4:13-15)
- (3) Another way in which the Spirit bears witness is by drawing you into communion with God. (Gal. 4:6) The Spirit produces prayer, praise, and worship—a crying out to God as your Heavenly Father.
- (4) Yet another way He bears witness is the spiritual fruit He produces in you: (Gal. 5:22,23)
- (5) **Thomas Brooks'** remarks conclude the matter: "The Spirit is the great revealer of the Father's secrets, he lies in the bosom of the Father, he knows every name that is written in the book of life; he is best acquainted with the inward workings of the heart of God toward poor sinners; he is the great comforter and the only sealer up of souls to the day of redemption. If you grieve by your willful sinning he that alone can gladden you, who then will make you glad?" (Heaven on Earth, p. 152, emphasis added) If you grieve or quench the Spirit by walking in the flesh, you short-circuit His ministries to you and will lack assurance as a result. ([Saved without a Doubt- Being Sure of Your Salvation](#))

Nigel Turner makes the interesting observation that the NT uses of "**Abba**" are in the context of spiritual warfare and prayer writing that

Abba was part of the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane (Mk 14:36) and the highly unusual way of addressing God (**Ed:** I would argue that while unusual for even pious Jews, it was not unusual for Jesus to address God with the intimate term "Father" which He used many times in the 3 years preceding His Garden of

Gethsemane trial. E.g., see Jn 5:17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 26, 36, 37, etc) doubtless reflects the extreme stress Jesus was under at the time... It also gives us a **new pattern** for Christian prayer (**Ed**: See Mt 6:9 below) and a **new word** to the language (**Ed**: Abba-Father). With the Spirit's help believers too make the cry of **Abba** in the hour of their spiritual struggle (Ro 8:15, Gal 4:6) and it is a sign that they are truly by adoption the sons of God... (Turner goes on to explain the "spiritual warfare" association of "Abba")... By the same Spirit in which the believer cries, Abba! he mortifies the deeds of the body (**Ed**: Ro 8:13, cf Col 3:5). The prayer is part of the battle of flesh against spirit, of the old man against the new, of the Law against grace, of the first Adam against the last. ([Christian Words. Page 1. Thomas Nelson. 1981](#))

Comment: There is certainly support for Nigel's premise, given that Ro 8:15 is in the context of putting to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (war against the flesh nature - Ro 8:13) and Gal 4:6 is in the context of subjection to the Law (Gal 4:4, 7 - The Law does not free us, but arouses our flesh - Ro 7:5).

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

Go, then, earthly fame and treasure! Come, disaster, scorn and pain!
In Thy service, pain is pleasure; with Thy favor, loss is gain.
I have called Thee, "Abba, Father"; I have set my heart on Thee:
Storms may howl, and clouds may gather, all must work for good to me.
- Henry F Lyte

Thomas Watson writes that "**Abba! Father!**" describes

a holy boldness and intimate confidence of love (which) is designed in the reduplication of the name (**Abba! Father!**). (Pneumatologia or A Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit)

Spurgeon...

God had one Son without sin, but never a son who did not pray. The cry of "Abba, Father!" is the mark of sonship. True prayer is the sign of a true-born child of God: "Behold, he prayeth" is the token by which each heir of glory is known. What, then, must be the condition of such as never pray? How dwelleth sonship in them? All who call upon the Lord in spirit and in truth may say, "Our Father:" it is as "the Father" that God seeketh such to worship him. O my heart, dread above all things a prayerless spirit! Thou hast not the key of David; how, then, canst thou enter into glory without knocking? He who had power to enter of himself yet asked that he might receive. Rouse thee, my soul, to renewed supplication, and may the Father hear thee at this hour, for Jesus' sake. (Flowers from a Puritan's garden, distilled and dispensed)

(Abba, Father is) A noble cry, with far more true eloquence in it than all the orations of Cicero and Demosthenes. Can we look up to God and cry "Abba, Father"? Then are we miracles of divine grace. (The Interpreter: Spurgeon's Devotional Bible)

We are not afraid of our own Father; we have a filial fear of him, but it is so mixed with love that there is no torment in it.

J Sidlow Baxter observes that...

There are the touches of dramatic reality supplied by Mark's retention of the very syllables which fell from our Lord's lips in the Aramaic dialect, sometimes with an interpretation, "Talitha kum" (Mk 5:41); "It is Corban" (Mk 7:11); "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened" (Mk 7:34); "Abba, Father" (Mk 14:36); "Eloi, Eloi" (Mk 15:34). It is from this shorter Gospel that we owe almost all the snapshots of our Lord's looks, gestures, and emotional reactions. (Explore the Book) (Golgotha - Mt 27:33 is also Aramaic)

Now, through Thy rended veil of flesh,
We dare the throne draw nigh,
And sprinkled with Thy blood afresh,
With boldness Abba cry.

THE DISCIPLE'S PRAYER

When the **disciples** asked Jesus how to pray, He answered by in essence inviting them to have the same level of intimacy with God that He experienced (ultimately something possible only for those **in Christ** by grace through faith)...

Pray, (proseuchomai in the present imperative = calls for prayer to be our lifestyle, yea, even our "lifeline!")

then, in this way: 'Our **Father** Who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. (Mt 6:9-note)

Comment: Jesus words used to open this model prayer must have "shocked" the ears of His hearers, as He instructed them to address God as **Father**, indicating a personal, caring relationship for those in His family as should characterize any godly father. And so the fact that He is "**our Father**" clearly establishes the family relationship. Without faith in Christ and union with Him in the New Covenant, it is useless to talk of trusting in the "Fatherhood" of God. Only believers can call God "Father," and then only on the basis of the fact that we have become His children through reception of Jesus as Savior and belief in His Name (Jesus means "Jehovah saves").

Most scholars agree that the language that Jesus spoke was Aramaic, so that the word He would likely have used for "**Father**" was the Aramaic word "**Abba**." If this is true, then it is very likely that every time Jesus addressed God in the Gospels as "**Father**" He was using this Aramaic word. The exception would have been when He addressed God in Mt 27:48 (quoting Ps 22:1), at a time when He bore sin which resulted somehow in separation (a mysterious, difficult to understand truth in view of the doctrine of the Trinity). However, before Jesus died, He returned to the designation of God as His "Father" (Lk 23:46, quoting Ps 31:5).

Hooker on Mt 27:48: These words provide a profound theological comment on the oneness of Jesus with humanity, and on the meaning of His death, which shares human despair to the full.

Recall that in the **parable of the prodigal**, Jesus picture God as a loving Father reaching out in grace and forgiveness to the younger brother who had dishonored him. It is interesting to notice that the prodigal's first thought on returning was "I will go to my father" and his first word to him was "Father!" (Lk 15:18, Lk 15:11-32).

MacArthur commenting agrees writing: that Jesus used the title **Father** in all of His prayers except the one on the cross when He cried "My God, My God" (Mt. 27:46), emphasizing the separation He experienced in bearing mankind's sin. Though the text uses the Greek Pater, it is likely that Jesus' used the Aramaic Abba when He gave this prayer. Not only was Aramaic the language in which He and most other Palestinian Jews commonly spoke, but **Abba** (equivalent to our "Daddy") carried a more intimate and personal connotation than **Pater**. ([MacArthur, J: Matthew 1-7 Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Spurgeon: Christ does something more for us. He gives us grace to feel our sonship. As we sang just now,—

"My faith shall 'Abba, Father,' cry,
And thou the kindred own."

God owns us as his children, and we own him as our Father; and henceforth, '**Our Father, which art in heaven,**' is no meaningless expression, but it comes welling up from the depths of our heart. Having given us grace to feel sonship, Christ gives us the nature of our Father. He gives us "power to become the sons of God." We get more and more like God in righteousness and true holiness. By his divine Spirit, shed abroad in our hearts, we become more and more the children of our Father who is in heaven, who doeth good to the undeserving and the unthankful, and whose heart overflows with love even to those who love not him. ([THE SIMPLICITY AND SUBLIMITY OF SALVATION](#))

Spurgeon: however humble the title "little children" may be, it is an indication of much good, for it is no small thing to be a little child in Christ Jesus, and to be able even to lisp, as a little child might, "Abba, Father," and to say, with all the rest of God's family, "Our Father, who art in heaven." ([IDOLATRY CONDEMNED](#))

Spurgeon: This prayer begins where all true prayer must commence, with the spirit of adoption, "Our Father." There is no acceptable prayer until we can say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father." This child-like spirit soon perceives the grandeur of the Father "in heaven," and ascends to devout adoration, "Hallowed be Thy name." The child lisping, "Abba, Father," grows into the cherub crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy."... Let the poorest and most despised believer lay hold upon this privilege; let not a senseless indolence make him negligent to trace his pedigree, and let him suffer no foolish attachment to present vanities to occupy his thoughts to the exclusion of this glorious, this heavenly honour of union with Christ... ([Lead Us Not Into Temptation](#))

Spurgeon: If an earthly father watches over his children with unceasing love and care, how much more does our heavenly Father? Abba, Father! He who can say this, hath uttered better music than cherubim or seraphim can reach. There is heaven in the depth of that word—Father! There is all I can ask; all my necessities can demand; all my wishes can desire. I have all in all to all eternity when I can say, "Father."

Henry Law (1884): We come to God as to our own Father. The expressions in the verse which reveal this truth lose much of their force by the insufficiency of translated language. A name is here given to believers

which implies that God is their Father. We trace it in the declaration that believers constitute one family. But there can be no family without a presiding Father. Hence in Christ we are privileged to cry directly to God, Abba, Father. O blessed family! Who can depict their privileges and their joys! This family has existed from all eternity in the counsels of heaven. It will exist through never-ending ages. The elders of this family have already passed through the grave and gate of death to the happy mansions of the redeemed. Their race is run—their fight is fought—their struggle is endured—their victory is won—their triumph is secured. We now are prisoners in the flesh. But soon we too shall be conquerors through the blood of the Lamb, and help to contribute to the blessed company. We shall be presented through our Elder Brother, who will recognize us as given of the Father unto Him. But while we tarry, let us tarry at heaven's gate, daily and hourly crying, Abba, Father. ([MEDITATIONS ON EPHESIANS](#))

Spurgeon: And what is “the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry **Abba, Father?**” I cannot tell you; but if you have felt it you will know it. It is a sweet compound of faith that knows God to be my Father, love that loves him as my Father, joy that rejoices in him as my Father, fear that trembles to disobey him because he is my Father and a confident affection and trustfulness that relies upon him, and casts itself wholly upon him, because it knows by the infallible witness of the Holy Spirit, that Jehovah, the God of earth and heaven, is the Father of my heart. Oh! have you ever felt the Spirit of adoption? There is nothing like it beneath the sky. Save heaven itself there is nothing more blissful than to enjoy that spirit of adoption. Oh! when the wind of trouble is blowing, and waves of adversity are rising, and the ship is reeling to the rock, how sweet then to say “My Father,” and to believe that his strong hand is on the helm!—when the bones are aching, and when the loins are filled with pain and when the cup is brimming with wormwood and gall, to say “My Father,” and seeing that Father's hand holding the cup to the lip, to drink it steadily to the very dregs, because we can say, “My Father, not my will, but your be done.” Well says Martin Luther, in his Exposition of the Galatians, “There is more eloquence in that word, ‘**Abba, Father,**’ than in all the orations of Demosthenes or Cicero put together.” “My Father!” Oh! there is music there; there is eloquence there; there is the very essence of heaven's own bliss in that word, “My Father,” when applied to God, and when said by us with an unflinching tongue, through the inspiration of the Spirit of the living God. ([THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD](#))

R Kent Hughes: That God should be personally addressed as “Father” may not seem out of the ordinary to those of us who frequent the church and regularly repeat the Lord's Prayer, but it was absolutely revolutionary in Jesus' day. The writers of the Old Testament certainly believed in the Fatherhood of God, but they saw it mainly in terms of a sovereign Creator-Father. In fact, God is only referred to as Father fourteen times in the Old Testament's thirty-nine books, and even then rather impersonally. In those fourteen occurrences of Father the term was always used with reference to the nation, not to individuals. You can search from Genesis to Malachi, and you will not find one individual speaking of God as Father... But when Jesus came on the scene, he addressed God only as Father. He never used anything else! All his prayers address God as Father. The Gospels (just four books) record his using Father more than sixty times in reference to God. So striking is this that there are scholars who maintain that this word Father dramatically summarizes the difference between the Old and New Testaments. No one had ever in the entire history of Israel spoken and prayed like Jesus. No one!...

When we say Abba today in our prayers, as we sometimes do, we are making the same sound that actually fell from Jesus' lips—and from the lips of his incredulous disciples. Jesus transferred the Fatherhood of God from a theological doctrine into an intense, practical experience, and he taught his disciples to pray with the same intimacy. And that is what he does for us. “Our Father”—“Our Abba”—“Our dearest Father”—this is to be the foundational awareness of all our prayers. Does it undergird your prayer life? Is a sense of God's intimate Fatherhood profound and growing in your life?

Addressing God as **Abba** (Dearest Father) is not only an indication of spiritual health but is a mark of the authenticity of our faith. Paul tells us in Galatians 4:6, “Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father!’ ” The impulse to call on God in this way is a sign of being God's child. Romans 8:15, 16 says the same thing: “you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘**Abba, Father!**’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.” True believers are impelled to say this.

This is precisely what happened to me when I came to faith during the summer before my freshman year in high school. Before that I had a cool theological idea of the universal paternity of God as the Creator of all mankind. His Fatherhood was there, but it was not personal. But with my conversion, God became warm and personal. I now knew God, and I knew he was my Father! This realization is one of the great and primary works of the Holy Spirit. He makes Christians realize with increasing clarity the meaning of their filial

relationship with God in Christ. He keeps enhancing this “spirit of sonship” in us and is ever integrating it into our lives.

Do you know that God is your Father? Do you think of him and address him as your “Dearest Father”?

If you cannot answer in the affirmative, it may be that he is not your spiritual Father and you need to heed the words of Scripture and come into relationship with him through Christ. “Yet to all who received him [Christ], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). ([The Sermon on the Mount- The Message of the Kingdom - Preaching the Word- R. Kent Hughes](#))

**That God is our Abba-Father is a truth we must cultivate
for the sake of our soul's health.**

-R Kent Hughes

Matthew Henry comments that **Abba**

denotes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid upon the relation. Little children, begging of their parents, can say little but Father, Father, and that is rhetoric enough. It also denotes that the adoption is common both to Jews and Gentiles: the Jews call him Abba in their language, the Greeks may call him pater in their language for in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew. ([Romans 8-14](#))

John MacArthur commenting on 1Jn 3:21,22...

Boldness in prayer is therefore clear evidence of a changed heart. Because they know God as “**Abba! Father!**” (Ro. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), believers realize that anything they ask within His will (cf. John 14:13, 14) He is going to hear because He has promised to meet all their needs (Phil. 4:19; cf. Ps. 23:1; 2Cor. 9:8). (1, 2, 3 John: MacArthur NT Commentary)

Alan Carr

The idea (of **Abba**) is that we are brought into such an intimate relationship with God that we assume the place of small children who lift their voices to God as a hurting, helpless child would who cries out to its father. There is the idea of intimacy and dependence, but of a complete lack of fear. Of course, there is respect and reverence, but there is the sense that our Father will not harm us, but that if He loved us enough to die for us, He will certainly care for us as we walk with Him.) ([Sermons and Outlines](#))

OLD TESTAMENT REFERENCES TO GOD AS FATHER

There are only a few OT allusions to God specifically designated as **Father** (10-14x depending on source consulted), but almost never addressed to specific individuals. The OT references to God as Father are addressed primarily to the nation of Israel or the people, the Jews. In the NT we see Jesus' "revolutionary revelation" of God as Father -- His Father, His Abba.

God is referred to as **Father** in the creative (not exactly biologically begetting) sense only twice:

Deuteronomy 32:6 "Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is not He your **Father** who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

Isaiah 64:8 But now, O LORD, You are our **Father**, We are the clay, and You our potter; And all of us are the work of Your hand.

God describes himself as **Father** to the king who will be his son

1 Chronicles 17:13 "I will be his **father** and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. (Context = 12 "He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever.)

1 Chronicles 22:10 (David is speaking to Solomon that God said) 'He (David's son) shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son and I (God) will be his **father**; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.'

More often, God is referred to as Father in a defending, saving context:

Psalm 89:26 "He will cry to Me, 'You are my **Father**, My God, and the rock of my salvation.'

Comment: David refers to God as Father and links Him with salvation. The heavenly Father saves His earthly

leader and protects Him. See Ps 68:5, 19-20; 85:1-7.

Ps 68:5 A **father** of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, Is God in His holy habitation.

Isaiah 63:16 For You are our **Father**, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not recognize us. You, O LORD, are our **Father**, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name.

NLT = Surely you are still our Father! Even if Abraham and Jacob would disown us, LORD, you would still be our Father. You are our Redeemer from ages past.

Comment: The phrase "Abraham does not know us" refers to the tendency of Jews to rely on their physical origin from the line of Abraham, which they felt conveyed the benefits of salvation (cp Jn 8:39. See also Ro 2:28, 29 for who is a true Jew). An similar but slightly different interpretation is that the Jews did not have the faith of Abraham. The **Septuagint (Lxx)** translates "Redeemer" (**goel/ga'al**) with the Greek verb **rhuomai** which is in the **aorist imperative** making is a prayer for God to deliver or rescue them.

Jeremiah 31:9 (Referring to the restoration of [believing = remnant] Israel in the last days) "With weeping they will come, And by supplication I will lead them; I will make them walk by streams of waters, On a straight path in which they will not stumble; For I am a father to Israel, And Ephraim is My firstborn."

Isaiah 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

Comment: In a single Messianic passage the Child is referred to in terms suitable to only God himself:

Jeremiah 3:4. "Have you not just now called to Me, 'My Father, You are the friend of my youth?'"

Comment: Calling God Father and failing to act like it is a deceptive sham. Pious prayer language claiming God as Father is worthless without matching deeds.

Jeremiah 3:19 "Then I said, 'How I would set you among My sons And give you a pleasant land, The most beautiful inheritance of the nations!' And I said, 'You shall call Me, My Father, And not turn away from following Me.'"

NLT = "I thought to myself, 'I would love to treat you as my own children!' I wanted nothing more than to give you this beautiful land--the finest inheritance in the world. I looked forward to your calling me 'Father,' and I thought you would never turn away from me again."

Comment: God puts "Father" into the mouth of his people in the form of address, the vocative

What does the concept of "father" teach us about God, especially the formal way which the word is used in the Old Testament? According to the quote from Otfried Hofius above, which two aspects of a father underlie our understanding of Father in the Old Testament? How should they affect our behavior?

The Psalmist relates the character of a godly earthly father to God...

Just **as a father** has compassion (Lxx = oiktiro/oikteiro in the present tense = in context God continually has mercy on us [we need it continually!]) on his children, so (just like an early father) the LORD has compassion (is quick to shows mercy which comes from His covenant love) on those who **fear** Him. (Ps 103:13)

Comment: Those who fear Him is the key phrase as Spurgeon explains below. In the Book of Revelation, John describes the "eternal Gospel" and then in context explains what the response should be to the Gospel - "Fear God and give Him the glory." (Rev 14:6, 7).

George Bowen on "fear": The fear of God is that deference to God which leads you to subordinate your will to His; makes you intent on pleasing Him; penitent in view of past willfulness; happy in His present smile; transported by His love; hopeful of His glory.

Spurgeon: To those who truly reverence (**fear**) His holy name, the Lord is a Father and acts as such. These He pities, for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to pity, and when they are at their best state they still need His compassion. **This should check every propensity to pride, though at the same time it should yield us the richest comfort.** Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God, Who is tenderness itself. **He is at this moment compassionating us, for the word is in the present tense; his pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it.**

Matthew Henry: The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pitieth them that fear him."

John Trapp on the phrase "**so** Jehovah pities us": **So** and ten thousand times more than **so**. For He is the "Father of all mercies"

Richard Baker: Though it be commonly said, "It is better to be envied, than pitied; "yet here it is not so: but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God, than to be envied of men.

Thou, through Him, art reconciled;

I, through Him, become Thy child;

Abba, Father! give me grace

In Thy courts to seek Thy face!

-James Montgomery

C H Spurgeon...

We are regenerated, by the Holy Spirit, and so receive the nature of children; and that nature, which is given by him, he continually prompts, and excites, and develops, and matures; so that we receive day by day more and more of the childlike spirit (**Ed**: One that is excited to cry out "**Abba! Father!**"). Now, beloved, this may not seem to you to be of very great importance at first sight; but it is so; for the church is never happy except as all her members walk as dear children towards God. Sometimes the spirit of slaves creeps over us: we begin to talk of the service of God as though it were heavy and burdensome, and are discontented if we do not receive present wages and visible success, just as servants do when they are not suited; but the spirit of adoption works for love, without any hope of reward, and it is satisfied with the sweet fact of being in the Father's house, and doing the Father's will. This spirit gives peace, rest, joy, boldness, and holy familiarity with God. A man who never received the spirit of a child towards God does not know the bliss of the Christian life; he misses its flower, its savor, its excellence, and I should not wonder if the service of Christ should be a weariness to him because he has never yet got to the sweet things, and does not enjoy the green pastures, wherein the Good Shepherd makes his sheep to feed and to lie down. But when the Spirit of God makes us feel that we are sons, and we live in the house of God to go no more out for ever, then the service of God is sweet and easy, and we accept the delay of apparent success as a part of the trial we are called to bear.

Now, mark you, this will have a great effect upon the outside world. A body of professors performing religion as a task, groaning along the ways of godliness with faces full of misery, like slaves who dread the lash, can have but small effect upon the sinners around them. They say, "These people serve, no doubt, a hard master, and they are denying themselves this and that; why should we be like them?" But bring me a church made up of children of God, a company of men and women whose faces shine with their heavenly Father's smile, who are accustomed to take their cares and cast them on their Father as children should, who know they are accepted and beloved, and are perfectly content with the great Father's will; put them down in the midst of a company of ungodly ones, and I will warrant you they will begin to envy them their peace and joy. Thus happy saints become most efficient operators upon the minds of the unsaved. O blessed Spirit of God! let us all now feel that we are the children of the great Father, and let our childlike love be warm this morning; so shall we be fit to go forth and proclaim the Lord's love to the prodigals who are in the far-off land among the swine.

Spurgeon adds that

"this sweet word "**Abba**" was chosen to show us that we are to be very natural with God, and not stilted and formal. We are to be very affectionate, and come close to Him, and not merely say "**Pater**," which is a cold Greek word, but say "**Abba**," which is a warm, natural, loving word, fit for one who is a little child with God, and makes bold to lie in his bosom, and look up into his face and talk with holy boldness. "**Abba**" is... but a babe's lisping. Oh, how near we are to God when we can use such a speech! How dear He is to us and dear we are to Him when we may thus address Him, saying, like the great Son himself, "**Abba, Father**..." When we cry, we cry, "**Abba**": even our very cries are full of the spirit of adoption... Be satisfied to offer to God... words salted with your griefs, wetted with your tears. Go to him with holy familiarity, and be not afraid to cry in his presence, "**Abba, Father**..." The word (Abba) implies fervency. A cry is not a flippant utterance, nor a mere thing of the lips, it comes up from the soul... We do cry after Him, our heart and our flesh cry out for God, for the living God, and this is the cry, "**Abba, Father**, I must know Thee, I must taste Thy love, I must dwell under Thy wing, I must behold Thy face, I must feel Thy great fatherly heart overflowing and filling my heart with

peace.” We cry, “**Abba, Father.**”... beloved, the Spirit of God makes you cry “**Abba, Father,**” but the cry is mainly within your heart, and there it is so commonly uttered that it becomes the habit of your soul to be crying to your heavenly Father. The... expression is “crying”, a present participle, indicating that he cries every day “**Abba, Father.**” Go home, my brethren, and live in the spirit of sonship. Wake up in the morning, and let your first thought be “My Father, my Father, be with me this day.” Go out into business, and when things perplex you let that be your resort “My Father, help me in this hour of need.” When you go to your home, and there meet with domestic anxieties, let your cry still be, “Help me, my Father.” When alone you are not alone, because the Father is with you: and in the midst of the crowd you are not in danger, because the Father Himself loves you... Go, and live as His children.” ([Adoption—The Spirit and the Cry - Sermon on Galatians 4:6](#))

John Calvin - Only if we walk in the beauty of God's law do we become sure of our adoption as children of the Father.

Baptist confession

All those that are justified, God vouchsafed, in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

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Father-Son - A friend of mine once told me about one of the most memorable days in his life. His newly-adopted five-year-old son, who had come from an overseas orphanage, was riding next to him in the car and suddenly placed his hand on his new father's leg and said with great thought, “Father, son.” It was a wonderful day for that father, but even more significant for that little boy. The day that you and I come to see that we are truly “Father, son” or “Father, daughter” is certainly one of the banner days of our lives. ([The Sermon on the Mount- The Message of the Kingdom - Preaching the Word- R. Kent Hughes](#))

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HI DAD! - I arrived at the airport from an out-of-town trip, and as is our routine I called to let my family know they could pick me up. I dialed our number and expected to hear the customary “Hello.” Instead, 6-year-old Stevie picked up the phone and said, “Hi, Dad!” Having been told when my plane was expected, Stevie had complete confidence that I would be on the other end of the phone.

His faith in Dad to be where he said he would be is a little like our faith in God to be on the other end of our prayers. This certainty of knowing that we have a listening and responsive Father comes in part from passages such as Romans 8. Here Paul told us that we who have trusted Christ as Savior have become children of God, and that because of this relationship we can go to Him with the assurance that He will hear us. Paul said that we can cry out, “Abba, Father” (v.15). Abba is an Aramaic word expressing intimacy. Today's equivalent is “Daddy.”

Do you need to talk with someone close? To share your cares and burdens? If you are a believer in Jesus, you have a Father who loves you and is waiting to hear from you. When the time comes to pray, you can be confident that your Father is on the line.

Come, my soul, your plea prepare,
Jesus loves to answer prayer;
He Himself has bid you pray,
Therefore will not turn away.
—Newton

You'll never get a busy signal on the prayer line to heaven.

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For more than a century, the pinnacle of golf has been to score 59—a score that had been recorded only three times in PGA Tour history before 2010. Then, in 2010, Paul Goydos scored a 59—only to be equaled a month later by Stuart Appleby's 59. Consequently, some sportswriters speculated that the most coveted achievement in golf was now becoming commonplace! It's amazing to see two 59s in the same season, but it would be a mistake to begin to view this as ordinary.

For those who follow Jesus Christ, it is also a mistake to view the remarkable as ordinary. Think about prayer for instance. At any moment we can talk to the Creator God who spoke the universe into existence! Not only are we welcomed into His presence, but we

are invited to enter boldly: "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16).

There is nothing ordinary about access to God—yet sometimes we take this privilege for granted. He is almighty God, but He is also our Father who loves us and allows us to call on Him at any moment of any day. Now that's extraordinary!

Our prayers ascend to heaven's throne
Regardless of the form we use;
Our Father always hears His own
Regardless of the words we choose.
—D. De Haan

God is always available to hear the prayers of His children

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WHY PRAY? - As a journalist, I have spent time with famous people who make me feel very small. I rarely sleep well the night before and have to fight a case of nerves. I wonder what I would do if seated at a banquet next to, say, Albert Einstein or Mozart. Would I chitchat? Would I make a fool of myself?

In prayer I am approaching the Creator of all that is—Someone who makes me feel immeasurably small. How can I do anything but fall silent in such presence? How can I believe that whatever I say matters to God?

The Bible sometimes emphasizes the distance between humans and God and sometimes the closeness. Without question, though, Jesus Himself taught us to count on the closeness. In His own prayers He used the word *Abba* (Daddy), an informal address that Jews had not previously used in prayer. A new way of praying was born.

Jesus understood better than anyone the vast difference between God and human beings. Yet He did not question the personal concern of God, who watches over sparrows and counts the hairs on our heads. He valued prayer enough to spend many hours at the task.

If I had to answer the question "Why pray?" in one sentence, it would be, "Because Jesus did."

If Jesus needed to pray, how can we do less?

Comfort - "He watch'd and wept; he pray'd and felt for all," wrote Oliver Goldsmith about one of his characters in *The Deserted Village*. In great distress, Jesus went to an olive orchard to talk to the only One who really feels for all—the heavenly Father. Jesus wanted to forgo the humiliation of a criminal cross. No Jew ever spoke to God as Jesus did in the garden; He called Him **Abba**, which is almost the same as Daddy or Papa in modern English. After His intimate conversation with His Father, He seemed ready to face His betrayer and judges, ready to begin His death march. The disciples, particularly Peter, James, and John, could have comforted and supported Jesus, but they did not hear the death knell. While Jesus struggled with His coming agony, they slept. God does not take naps. Always alert to our suffering, He comforts us in our troubles so that we can console others (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). In reaching out to others, we walk arm-in-arm with them—crying, praying, hoping—feeling all it means to be human.

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LIVING ROYALLY - There is an ancient story about a man named Astyages who determined to do away with a royal infant named Cyrus. He summoned an officer of his court and told him to kill the baby prince. The officer in turn delivered the youngster to a herdsman with instructions that he should take him high up into the mountains where the baby would die from exposure.

The herdsman and his wife, however, took the child and raised him as their own. Growing up in the home of those humble peasants, he naturally thought they were his real parents. He was ignorant of his royal birth and his kingly lineage. Because he thought he was a peasant, he lived like one.

Many Christians fail to realize the royal heritage that is theirs in Christ. They live as spiritual peasants when they should be living royally. According to the apostle Paul, believers "are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). He also said, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:6-7).

God has given us everything we need to live victorious, fulfilling lives. Let's not live like peasants.

Rejoice—the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore!
Rejoice, give thanks, and sing
And triumph evermore.
—Wesley

A child of the King should reflect his Father's character.