

Our Father, who art in Heaven

Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world. James 1:27

A Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. Psalm 68:5

Several years ago I confided to a friend that I was concerned about my son growing up without the presence of a father in our home. She immediately started quoting scriptures about the love God has for fatherless children and told me to make sure that my son heard them consistently. I was astonished to learn that when this precious woman was very young she had difficulty praying the first line of the Lord's Prayer: *Our Father, who art in Heaven...* Her abusive earthly father caused years of fear and chaos and she was tearful as she recounted some of her experiences. While she was still a young child she began reading scriptures pertaining to widows and orphans and was amazed that God calls himself her father.

As she progressed through the story her eyes lit up when she talked about how loved she felt, and decided that she was special in God's eyes. Her life was changed by that! This had a profound impact on me, as I had known this woman, so strong in her faith, for a long time and I could not imagine a time when she felt she could not pray to her Heavenly Father.

Just as my friend found comfort in reading about the unimaginable depths of God's love for her, I too have found help and consolation in various scriptures. Choosing just one is impossible, but Zephaniah 3:17 {ESV} has been "my verse" for the last year or two.

The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Prayer: Father, thank you for the many good things You provide. Your powerful name calms disquiet and eases fear. You are a friend when we are friendless and a Father when we are fatherless. You lavish your love upon us so that even in our lowest moments we know that **we** are your children! Comfort those who carry the marks of hurt and betrayal just below the façade they show to this world.

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Scripture: New King James Version