

What do these passages tell you about Jesus' understanding of the Father?

Matthew 6:25-32:

Matthew 7:7-11:

Luke 12:22-32:

Where do you see, in Jesus, the kind of attitudes and characteristics that Jesus uses in describing the Father?

Do you relate to God, the Father, with an understanding that He is just like Jesus describes and pictures Him? If not, why not? If so, how does Jesus' description shape your interactions with the Father?

Spend some time talking to God. Start by turning your attention to Jesus. Thank Him for how He reveals the Father to you; talk to Him about what He shows you about the Father. Then, take some time to speak, specifically, to the Father. Talk to Him about how He is a father to you, what your experience of His love for you is like, and what you hope to experience in your relationship with Him. (It might help, as you pray, to pray out loud. There is nothing "magical" about praying out loud but: 1) it is modeled for us in Scripture; and 2) it can help to keep our minds from wandering when we pray.)

Day Five

In the coming of Jesus into the world, we get to see what God is like. Jesus is the "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father." And in those names, we are given a profound glimpse into who God is to us. In particular, to identify Jesus, the Messiah, with the title "Everlasting Father" calls our attention to how he reveals

the "fatherly heart" of God for us. And, seeing that and knowing that should shape how we relate to God.

Read the first part of 1 John 3:1. What does John want believers to take note of, to see?

Why would John call attention to this?

Notice what Paul has to say about the implications of Jesus' entrance into our world in Galatians 4:4-7.

What is it that the coming of the Messiah does for you? What happens because Jesus came?

How does Paul describe what happens in us, individually, because of Jesus' entrance into the world? Once we come to believe, what changes in us?

The word "Abba" (Galatians 4:6) is not the formal word for "father;" it is more like the endearing, heart-felt cry of "Daddy" that rises from the lips of a child longing for his or her father. When have you felt or sensed or experienced that kind of cry rising in your own heart?

Why do you think it is that God sends the Spirit into our hearts to stir that cry? What does God want for you?

Part of what Christmas really means—based on what we have seen in our study this week—is that we get to relate to God in a "forever our father" kind of way. As you continue your Christmas celebration this week, let that thought flavor all your singing, all your gift giving, all your activity. "I am celebrating all that my heavenly Dad has become to me and for me through the sending of the Son."



Day One

Perhaps it happened when you met your new boss. It is likely to be the case when you first met your fiancée's parents. Typically, there is an "adjustment" to be made; an adjustment from *what you thought* they would be like to *how they really are*. We can enter into relationships with some pre-conceived notion about what the other will be like only to discover, in relationship, that some of those preconceptions were entirely unfounded.

A significant part of God's self-revelation in the Scriptures actually addresses that issue: Helping us abandon our inaccurate preconceptions about what He is like and helping us to grasp what He really is like. And Jesus' entrance into the world is God's pre-eminent way of telling us about Himself.

What do the following texts tell you about what God was doing, in and through birth of the Messiah, Jesus, to reveal Himself?

John 1:14-18:

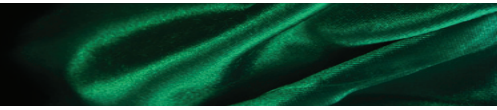
John 6:43:

John 14:8-11:

Hebrews 1:1-4:

How would you summarize what these texts are telling us?

What is the difference between saying that *Jesus is "God come in the flesh"* (which is true!) and saying that *Jesus fully reveals to us what God is really like*?



Although Jesus, the Son, and God, the Father, are not the same “person,” they are the same God. Without doubt, that thought is a bit difficult to grasp, but it is what the Scriptures declare. So, keeping that in mind, what is the value of recognizing that Jesus perfectly presents to you a picture of what God, the Father, is like?

Day Two

Let’s explore a bit further the relationship that exists between Jesus (God, the Son) and God, the Father. The following are a few select passages where Jesus speaks of His own relationship with the Father. Make some observations about Jesus’ relationship with the Father as you read the following passages:

John 5:19-40:

John 10:22-38:

What stands out to you most about how Jesus speaks about His relationship with the Father from these passages?

What does Jesus’ relationship with the Father tell you about how Jesus “shows” us the Father?

Look back at one of the passages we touched on yesterday; read John 14:8-11. How does what you have looked at today fill in even more of the picture of what Jesus meant when He said that “when you see Me, you see the Father”?

One of the things that the relationship that Jesus has with the Father means is that Christmas is not simply about us coming to know “the child born, the son given,” but that in that gift we also get to know the Father. We know God in a full way, because of Christmas. Spend time today talking to God about that idea . . . about that “Christmas gift” that He gave us in the coming of the Son.

Day Three

Over the Christmas season, we have been trying to unpack the short prophecy found in Isaiah 9; read 9:6-7.

We have already looked at the description or naming of the promised Messiah as “Wonderful Counselor” and “Mighty God.” As you recall from our previous studies, what do those two names tell us about the Messiah, Jesus?

The next name given to this promised “child” is “Everlasting Father.” As we have seen in this study, Jesus, the coming Messiah, is *not* the same person as the one we know as the Father. But there is something appropriate about referring to the Messiah as “Everlasting Father.”

Isaiah has already identified the Messiah as the “Mighty God.” To refer to Him that way already conveys a sense of “eternality” (seeing, after all, that God *is* eternal). So there is something more than merely long-lastingness in view in this name. To speak of the Messiah as “Everlasting Father” has been understood in two ways (both of which seem to have some Biblical warrant):

He is the father, or origin, of time eternal.

He is forever and always one like a father.

Which view do you feel conveys something fresh about the Messiah? Why?

Embracing the idea that this name most likely conveys the idea that the Messiah will forever be a father to the people of God, let’s look at some of the other Old Testament passages that speak of the “fatherly” character of God. What do the following passages tell you?

Psalm 68:4-6:

Psalm 89:20-29:

Psalm 103:1-14:

Isaiah 63:7-64:9:

What kinds of things, what sort of character qualities, are highlighted in these passages that speak of the “fatherly” character of God?

Where do you see these qualities or attributes reflected in Jesus’ own life and ministry? Can you think of specific passages or incidents from Jesus’ life and ministry that put these things on display?

Although Jesus is *not* the person of the Father, as Messiah, the “son given,” He does underscore and highlight and reveal the “fatherly” character of God. This is God’s disposition toward us *forever!* That is part of the Christmas message of Isaiah. What does it mean to you, personally, that the God of the universe has this kind of disposition toward *you*?

Day Four

Let’s keep looking at what it means to think of God in “fatherly” terms. Certainly, some have not had good experiences with earthly fathers; but even the best earthly dad is only a vague shadow of the real Father. So let’s let Jesus and the Scriptures define “fathering” to us and not limit it to what we have personally experienced. Keep that in mind as you read the following.