“Are You Forgetting Something?”

Today in Christianity our focus is often on Jesus Christ and, to a little lesser degree, on the Holy Spirit. However, we rarely focus on God the Father, which is why the Father is often referred to as the “forgotten” member of the Trinity. This lack of focus has significant implications on how we understand, worship and relate to God and even impacts the way we understand earthly fatherhood.

The Father is God –
The Bible presupposes and reiterates that the God of the Old is the God of the New Testament. Usually the NT term “God” (theos, c. 1350x) designates God the “Father” (used c. 254x for deity). Many NT phrases refer to him.

- “God the Father” Jn 6:27
- “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” *Eph 1:3
- “the glorious Father” *Eph 1:17
- “one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all and in all” 4:6
- “Father of Light” Jas 1:17
- “the Alpha and Omega... who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty” Rev 1:8

But why is this so important? Because understanding God the Father has a direct impact on the way we understand our Fathers, our husbands, and our role as Fathers. And in the world today the idea of Fatherhood is dramatically slipping away. And the way we as adults and our children view God the Father is undeniably linked to the way we view our fathers. Because of this many people today have trouble relating to a father, God.

1. Think of the differences around the world. Consider for example, the cultural differences of the role of father in different parts of the world. We think of what a father might be in the African culture. Sometimes, a tribal chief or a powerful one that is served by many, or in the Middle Eastern culture, in Jordan that about 15% of the men have more than one wife. Certainly, the father figure in Middle Eastern cultures are very strong, authoritative, dominant figure in the minds of many. In the Indian culture, in the Chinese culture where often there is quite a lot of distance between father and daughter, for example. Or in the Hispanic with a stereotype, but the macho view of what male is like, and often the father, the strong figure again.

2. How’s the father portrayed in our own secular society? In the media? Aloof, an idiot, disengaged, etc… Being a father, I feel the brunt of that sometimes.

3. Consider the experience of children of abusive father relationships. Some of you may have suffered that, whether a father who was mean spirited, or abused you and you have a hard time liking the word father. And then there are, of course, chemically addicted fathers. Some of you are out of those backgrounds, broken families through divorce, through adultery of various kinds, and on from there.
“Think of the United States, for example, and our youth in this country, living in an increasingly fatherless society. Nearly 40% of all youth live without their father, nearly 40%. One-third of them hardly ever see their father. 75% of children from one parent families will experience poverty before they turn 11 years of age (NRI, Religion Today, June 18, 2001, crosswalk.com). Of those who became criminals, you have 42% who didn’t even know their fathers. 6% of their fathers were in prison, 5% were deceased, 9 1/2% of those fathers of those as criminals, lived in other cities. 12.4% live separately in the same city. Only 25%, more or less, had fathers actually living at home, of all those youth in the United States who became criminals in one sense or another, juvenile delinquents apparently, or into prison.” (Why Do Kids Become Criminals? Investor’s Business Daily, Dec 20, 1993)

“The impact of a father is no different in Christian homes. One startling bit of research conducted by the Christian Business Men’s Committee found the following: When the father is an active believer, there is about a seventy-five percent likelihood that the children will also become active believers. But if only the mother is a believer, this likelihood is dramatically reduced to fifteen percent.”
—Keith Meyering, in Discipleship Journal, issue #49, p. 41

Moreover, dads who are at home are often portrayed in television, in film and in music as uninvolved, unfaithful, overwhelmed, maybe you’re feeling a bit that today yourself if you’re a man, and irrelevant. Many sociologists yet concur that the father is essential to the healthy growth of the children. To fill that need that a child has in moral, emotional, psychological, even intellectual ways. Youth desire a father, of course, that they can trust, but the modern perspective on earthly fatherhood, surely makes it difficult to trust a heavenly Father, doesn’t it?

The image of our own father in this world has a lot to do, doesn’t it, with how we perceive God, and therefore, as you communicate who is our God and speak of God the Father, there may be some reconstruction that needs to be done.

In order to do this, we must understand to whom God is Father.
1. **Ex 4: 22** tells us that **God is Father to Israel**.
2. **Matt 3:16-17** says this, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” We see that He is the Father in a special way to Son.
3. In another sense, the Father is the **Father to all believers. Romans 8:14 – 16**: "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received the Spirit of slavery, leading to fear again, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out Abba Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God."
4. Well, there are other phrases. He is the **Father of Glory**. He is the **Father of angels**, in the sense that they are sons of God, as we’re told in Job. He, again, is the **Father of the fatherless**. He is the Father of all. **Psalm 68:5** says, “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.”
And as Father how has God revealed Himself to us? Let’s think a bit about the Father’s character and His roles.

**Creator (Gen 1:1; Ac 17:24-25; Rev 4:11).** He is also the Creator. He is the *fons divinitatis*, the Divine fountainhead of all existence. He’s the Originator of everything, including human life. You’ll recall that in John 5 our Savior says that the Father has life in Himself and has given it to the Son to have life in Himself also. God gives life to the world through the Son and through the Spirit. And of course, the Son is life itself. “I am the way, the truth and the life.” The Spirit is called the Spirit of life as well. So, these are realities that are true, yet the Father, in a particular way, is seen as the source of life for everything else, even as through the Son and the Spirit.

**Sovereign Ruler (Eph 1:3-14; 1 Tim 6:15-16).** He is the sovereign ruler. I think most of you are familiar with Ephesians 1, but from the Father, the decree of God and how the elect are chosen, and that grace comes to us through Christ, and we are sealed and indwelled by the Holy Spirit.

But there is that sense of the Father as the transcendent Ruler of all. He is the absolute other in one sense. There’s nothing above or behind Him. All things come forth from the Father, all things finally return to the Father. The plan of all time and space and history is His purpose and ends of creation is finally declared by Him. And yet, this same God transcended sovereign Ruler is the One who comes to us in His grace and mercy, freely comes to us in the most extraordinary way, and allows us to call Him Father.

**He is Holy Judge (2 Pet 3:10),** or the Lord Chief Justice of all the universe. As the supremely just Judge, who exists in unapproachable light, the Father is the moral absolute of all existence, not that the Son and the Spirit aren’t equally so. They are, but the Father in particular, in terms of the roles of the God head, seems to be the one to whom we are reconcile and so much more. All that is contrary to the divine nature must be brought to justice in an ethical universe.

Yet, our Father in Heaven is also the compassionate reconciler (Jn 3:16; 2 Cor 5:18-19). We think of John 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only, one and only, or only begotten Son.” 2 Corinthians 5:18-19: “All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them.” So God is the one who takes initiative, though hostile to the world, He loved the world, giving Christ as that payment that satisfies His wrath against sin, so that we might be reconciled with to God.

Of course, Jesus Christ is our substitute for sin. The Spirit applies this work of Christ in our lives. Yet, it is by the Father that we are finally called to salvation (Rom 8:28). We are justified before the Father (John 3:16; Rom 3:24, 4:24). We are adopted by the Father (Gal 4:6). We are made sons with Christ by the Father (Jn 1:12), and with whom we are ultimately brought into new life and fellowship (2 Cor 5:17).

Finally, we read in 1 Corinthians 15 an extraordinary thing. That as all things flow forth from the Father as the *fons divinitatus*, so all things return to the Father (1 Cor 15:24-28). "Then the end will come when He, Christ, hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He, Christ, has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is
death. For he ‘has put everything under his feet.’ Now when it says that ‘everything’ has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all." Wow, seems to be the distant future at the end of time and yet, we say at the same time that the Son giving everything back to the Father, still the Son co-reigns with the Father and the Spirit, there is the fullness where God is all in all in a Trinitarian sense as well.

So, there are as well, other analogies in terms of the believers relationship with the Father that are instructive. We won’t go through them all, but potter and clay. God, Yahweh, is the Potter. We are the clay. The shepherd of the sheep, and of course, Jesus is the good Shepherd, but the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Our Yahweh, and certainly, that includes both the Father and the Son, in some sense. He is the Master. We are the servants. He is the Husband, we are the bride.

So, God the Father is that sovereign Ruler. He is the Creator. He is that holy Judge. He is the compassionate Reconciler. He is the One to whom all things return. He’s the Potter, He is the Husband.

We can see all of this, but how is God the Father our example in our earthly lives as fathers and husbands, or brothers? How does God the Father inform how we should understand our earthly fathers?

**Lessons for Fatherhood from God the Father**

1. As the Father is profoundly good, so fathers should be men of goodness, of integrity and purity. In a day of ease of access to things on the internet and iPhones/iPads, in a day of secrecy, all the more we are called to be men of purity and integrity.
2. As God the Father is eternally wise, so fathers, instead of being disengaged, as our cultural icons, should be thoughtful, wise, orienting, and instructing our families.
3. While God is absolute truth, God is also the Father infinitely created. He is the Creator. So fathers ought to encourage – instead of saying, “Hey, we’ve always done it this way, son,” or “daughter,” or “Oh no! That’s our way!” We should be fresh; allow innovation, allow the expansiveness of those we are related to.
4. We are to listen. We are to share. That’s essential. As the Father loves the Son, so we are to love those God has given us. I think Ephesians 5 has something to say about that, doesn’t it?
5. As God disciplines his children, so the good father guides and disciplines his children, not harshly, but firmly.
6. As God the Father calls for respect, so fathers ought to act in such a way that requires respect, not in pride, but in dignity. If a child does not respect you as father, how will he ever respect God?
7. As the Father leads in the trinity, so fathers should engender loving cooperation and order in the family. The father listens to the son; the father responds to the son. There is a reciprocality in this.
8. And as the Father is self-giving – we usually think, “Well, the Son gave His life on the cross, the Spirit’s the humble one, he’s always glorifying the Son and the Father,” however we see that the Father is profoundly self-giving as well toward others in the Trinity, as well as toward all creation. And so fathers should be characterized by generosity and self-sacrifice for family and others.
This morning as we leave here I want to ask you two questions:

- How is God a Father to you?
- How does He work in your life as Father?

These are two extremely important questions because how you answer them determines how you understand God, it determines how some of you understand your role as Father/parent, and it determines how you understand your own earthly father. And understanding these things not only impacts your own life, but those of your children and their children and the way they see God and fatherhood.

And while you think about these two questions I want to say that no father can be the father that God is. If you have difficult negative memories of a father, let God the Father be your father. He is the absolute Father. Rather than reject God as Father, turn to him. He is the very solution to your resentment. He is the perfect, loving Father you were made for. He is a “Father to the fatherless.”

No father or husband is without fault. Rather than resent your dad, or husband, or grandfather, thank God for them. Look to the Heavenly Father beyond them. Earthly fathers were designed to reflect something of who God is, but never to substitute him. Fathers must trust God as Father as well. You can trust God the Father. Completely.

And with that it’s befitting, isn’t it, that we stand and cite together the Lord’s prayer. How relevant is this, which is the one prayer our Savior taught us to pray.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (Matthew 6:9b-13)

  Our Father which art in heaven,
  Hallowed be thy name.
  Thy kingdom come.
  Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
  Give us this day our daily bread.
  And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
  And lead us not into temptation,
  but deliver us from evil:
  For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
  for ever. Amen.