

June 18, 2017

Text: [Romans 8:14-17](#)**Title:** “ABBA!”

There was a little girl who looked up at her father as they enjoyed their dinner and said, “Daddy, you’re the boss in our family, right?” The father was very pleased to hear it and confidently replied, “Yes, my little princess.” The girl then continued, “That’s because mommy put you in charge, right?” The way our children look at is really interesting, isn’t it?

I am sure many of us read this in many different magazines or newspapers some time ago. It shows us how our thoughts about father go through the years:

4 years: My Dad can do anything.

7 years: My Dad knows a lot, a whole lot.

8 years: My father doesn’t know quite anything.

12 years: Oh, well, naturally father doesn’t know that, either.

14 year: Father? Hopelessly old-fashioned.

21 years: Oh, that man is out-of-date. What did you expect?

25 years: He knows a little bit about it, but not much.

30 years: Maybe we ought to find out what Dad thinks.

35 years: A little patience. Let’s get Dad’s opinion before we do anything.

50 years: I wonder what Dad would have thought about it. He’s pretty smart.

60 years: My dad knew absolutely everything!

65 years: I’d give everything if Dad were here, so I could talk this over with him. I really miss that man.

Isn’t it something? I am sure many of you do miss your father. Of course, not everyone has/d a good relationship with their father. And not everyone even knows his or her father. That is sad, but still, for most of us, our fathers are very special.

There was a son who wanted to call his father by his first name. He thought it meant that their relationship was taking on a more adult tone. In Korea, we can’t even think about this! Anyway, his father did not object at all, but he did point out something significant to his son. He said, “You can call me by my first name if you like. There are hundreds of people who do. But there are only three people in the world who can call me Dad. Which name do you think carries more weight?”

Now, friends, I’m sure you remember how Jesus prayed to God by calling Him *Abba* or Daddy in Mark 14:36. *Abba* is the Aramaic word for father or daddy. In fact, Jesus shocked many of His contemporaries by referring to God as His Father and by inviting His followers to call God “father.”

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By our union with Jesus Christ, we Christians enter into the same intimacy with the Heavenly Father. Instead of the spirit of slavery, as Paul explains in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:5, the believers receive “the Spirit of adoption” and enter into the “adoption as children.” And because we are children, “God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Friends, isn’t it a real blessing that we can call God, *Abba*? And it is because we have a special relationship with Him in Jesus Christ. In the same way, earthly fathers are very important to us because we have a special relationship with them. They are special people in our lives. Why? Because there are some things they do for their children.

First of all, they provide for their family’s physical well-being. They are providers. Of course, this is not to say that fathers are the sole support of most families today. And this is not to say that they are the chief support in many families. Rather, in today’s families, mom may make more money than dad. It might bother some dads to accept it, but the world is changing.

Anyhow, their role as provider has become all-important to them, so if they lose their job, their world comes crashing in. If they cannot provide for their families as they feel they ought, then they feel a sense of failure. You should understand their psychology on this. So, don’t just push them. Try to accept them. And when they retire, many men feel that their usefulness has come to an end, though it is not.

Friends, the role as a provider is an important one, but wise father understands it has never been the most important role a father plays. There are some other roles as a provider. If a father has taken time with his kids, if he has taught them positive lessons that will last them a life time, if he has played with them and prayed with them, and taught them responsibility, they will forever remember those things far more fondly than what kind of car the family drove or how big their house was. How much healthier most fathers would be and how much healthier most kids would be, if fathers understand that providing for a family is much more than a paycheck.

Secondly, there is another role for most fathers. And it is to be a model, not a critic. Why? Because children need it. Of course, it is not that easy to exercise than to understand. That is why we are called “father” or mother.

I’m sure many of us know who George Foreman is. He’s a retired heavy-weight champion, author, ordained Baptist minister, and entrepreneur. But, do you know he did something quite extraordinary? He named all his sons George after himself. Some people accused him of being egocentric. But he has his own reason.

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Foreman never knew who his father was. He was often picked on and shamed for not having a father at home. He grew up with a hole in his heart, never knowing who he really was. We call it identity crisis. Can you imagine a boy with that kind of wound? So after he got married he has dedicated himself to being a better father to his sons. By giving them all his name, he had meant to give them the gift of identity. Their father was proudly claiming them as his own.

The gift of identity is the most important gift a father or a mother can give their children. And we do that, not by nagging or pushing, but by modeling love, acceptance and responsible living.

We know that Jonny Cash had lots of problems, but this is what his son John Carter wrote about his father: “My father wasn’t the perfect ideal of a father, there’s no doubt. He struggled. He dealt with addiction throughout his life. But the good in him triumphed. I learned at a very early age that it was of the utmost importance to show honor to your father. It wasn’t just something that he told me or taught me by disciplinary measures. It was something that I saw my father display to his parents. I never saw him disrespect my grandfather, even though he may have disagreed with him.” And he continued to say that there are many things that he learned from his father such as honesty, Christian view of marriage and about money.

Children need models, because this is the way they learn and grow to understand what responsible, Christian living is all about. They learn not from lectures, but from exemplifying. They learn from watching those adults closest to them. Friends, how do you handle anger, disappointment, and frustration? How do you treat people who are different from you? These are what they learn directly from you. We can teach them all kinds of positive values here at church, but they will not have much impact if those values are not exercised by those at home.

And lastly, let us not forget that our children or grandchildren will always need our love and support from us. Don’t we understand that parenting does not end when our children enter school or when they finish school or even when they get married? In fact, parenting is a life-time commitment to always be there with love and support.

There is a famous story about a president of Korean government in exile about 80 years ago when Japan occupied Korea. He was in his mid-fifties and lived with his mother in Shanghai. And whenever he left his home for work in the morning his mother never forgot telling him to watch out for cars when he goes across the street.

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No matter what he does, no matter how old he is, no matter what kind of social status he might have, he is forever her son whom she needs to take care of.

I don't know whether any of you has seen this video clip about Derek Redmond who is a retired British athlete. During his career, he held the British record for the 400 metres sprint, and won gold medals in the 4x400 metres relay at the World Championships and European Championships. However, this is what happened at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona.

(Showing a video clip of International Olympic Committee's
"Celebrate Humanity", 1992)

Isn't it what being a father is about? And you know what? The role of father I have been describing is very similar to our understanding of Triune God. And today's Scripture is one of the few in which God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are even mentioned in the same chapter. As you may know, in the Bible, God is revealed to us in three persons: God the Father, the Provider; God the Son, the Model; and the God the Holy Spirit, the One who jumps out of the stands and helps us across the finish line!

God as Father is our Creator, Provider, and Sustainer. But God knew that we needed to see the life of faith in human flesh, so God came to us in Jesus of Nazareth to be our Teacher, our Model, and our Savior. And after Christ's ascension, God came in the form of the Holy Spirit to sustain us and to help us in our daily walk.

Friends, there is one God, but revealed in three roles just as fathers and (mothers) can be one person but play three important roles in our lives – provider, model and source of ongoing support. So, friends, let us just give our thanks to our earthly fathers whether they are with us now or with God, and give also thanks and praise to our Heavenly Father, ABBA! Amen.