

Disclaimer: The following document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

Who's Your Daddy?

I John 3:1-3

August 19, 2007

Peter Hiett

One of my very favorite stories is one that Fred Craddock tells, about an encounter he had on vacation in Tennessee.

The kids were at Grandma's. Fred and his wife were coming home through the Smoky Mountains and decided to stop at a favorite, little café, the Blackberry Inn. They didn't want to be bothered.

An old fellow walked into the restaurant and began talking to everybody. Fred thought, "Oh, please let me just eat in peace." But sure enough, the old guy meandered over to their table.

"You folks on vacation?"

"Yes."

"Gonna be here long?"

"No, not gonna be here long."

"What do ya do?"

Fred was waiting for this question. He had an answer that scared folks off: "Well, I'm a pastor . . . actually a homiletics professor at a major seminary in Atlanta." The old guy lit up. "You're a preacher man! I've got a story for you!" And he pulled up a chair.

I was born back in these mountains. My mama wasn't married. Other women in town liked to spend time guessin' who my daddy was. And I didn't know who my daddy was. That was a real problem back then . . . different than now.

My mama worked a lot, and other kids weren't allowed to play with a boy like me. I'd hide in the weeds at recess, and I ate my lunch alone. They said I wasn't any good and I'd never amount to anything.

The kids used to call me "Ben the Bastard Boy, Ben the Bastard Boy." I thought Bastard Boy was my last name.

The old man started weeping. He collected himself.

I'm sorry. What I was meanin' to tell you was that there was this church in Laurel Springs. Had this preacher with a big voice like God. I knew church wasn't a place for boys like me, but sometimes I'd sneak in

and sit toward the back and sneak out before the service ended.

This one day that preacher went on, and oh, I just got lost in what he was sayin'. Before I knew it, church was over. The aisles got jammed up, folks were lookin' at me, I was makin' for the back door quick as I could when all at once I felt this big hand on my shoulder.

I heard that voice, big like God: "Boy!" It was the preacher. He said, "Boy!" and I froze. He talked so loud everybody heard. He said, "Boy . . . who's your daddy?" It was like a knife in my heart. Then he said, "Boy, I know who your daddy is! Let's see. You're a child of . . ." He paused, and it seemed like forever. It seemed like judgment day. "Boy, you're

a . . . you're a child of *God*. And I say, I see a striking resemblance!"

Then he swatted me on the bottom and said, "Now, you run along and go claim your inheritance."

The old guy looked up at Professor Craddock and said, "I was *born* that day." Then the old man got up and left.

Immediately the waitress came scurrying over to the table. She said, "What'd he say? What'd he say?" Craddock said, "Well, he told me a story . . . why do you ask?" The waitress looked at him a moment and said, "Don't you know who that is? Why, that's Ben Hooper, the illegitimate boy elected twice the governor of Tennessee."

Well, he couldn't have been *that* illegitimate if his daddy was God.

I John 3:1: "Behold ["idete"—observe, consider, ponder, chew on this] what manner of love the Father has given [lavished or bestowed] on us, that we should be called the children ["tekna," little children, kids] of God." And that's not just what we're called; it's what we really *are*.

"Idete" is imperative tense. You'd better do it, consider it, and ponder it. Put it in your pipe and smoke it! What? The kind of love God has for you.

I tend to think the love of God is this ontological, philosophical, mandated necessity . . . and it is. I mean, God *has* to love me. It's His nature.

But John is saying, "Don't you see how He feels about you? The kind of love it is? Behold, it's daddy love!"

It appears that Jesus used the word "Abba" when speaking of His Father in His native tongue. Translators are scared to translate it in the Epistles. But the translation is fairly clear. The word means "Daddy." Da Da, Pa Pa, Aba Aba . . . It's a child's first word. And the father claims it as his own. "He said my name!" We're talking about daddy love.

In the Judaism of Jesus' day, to refer to God as your own father was unthinkable, let alone to address Him as Abba-Daddy. So when Jesus did it, it was a revelation of the heart of God. "Jesus from the bosom of the Father, He has made Him known."

Jesus is the Word of the Father—the logic of the Father—the message of the Father. He said, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father."

When Jesus rose, He said to Mary, “I’m going to my Father and your Father”—my Daddy and your Daddy.

In John 17, Jesus says to the Father, “You loved them as you loved me.” Did you get that? The way God feels about Jesus is the way He feels about you! “Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us.”

In I John, John writes incredible theology about the nature of good and evil, judgment and ethics, eschatology . . . and then in I John 3:1, it’s like he stops and says, “Behold, check it out, consider the kind of love God has for you! This is what I’m talking about! Are you having a hard time following all this theology? Well, God is your Daddy.”

That’s a revelation,
and it gives new meaning to everything.

Behold what sort of love! So let’s consider it:

This is a picture of my son Coleman. He thinks he’s cool and important. But in this picture he’s in a panic, terribly distressed, because he got his musical potty chair that plays “Row, Row, Row Your Boat” stuck on his head and can’t get it off. Furthermore, his dad’s not helping; he’s just taking a picture.

I have this picture framed and hanging in my very nice office. You know, I think I am important and many times leave my office terribly distressed and in a panic. This picture is to remind me of who I really am: a little child of God. God knows me as I truly am, and He *likes* me. I really *like* my son Coleman. That’s how I *feel* about him. Consider that . . .

However, if you stood in my living room in a diaper and cowboy boots with a toilet seat stuck on your head, I wouldn’t feel the same way. You’re not my child. You’re God’s child; that’s how *He* feels about you. But you’re not my child, and I’m not your daddy.

You see, daddy love is **unique**, different from all other loves. It’s **unearned**. You can’t earn it. A baby can’t do anything to earn love. They suck and wet, and that’s about it. But daddies and mommies *die* for babies.

That shocked me as a new dad, this new kind of love. *They* didn’t earn it, and *I* didn’t earn it. It just showed up in me and not to my credit. (If you can’t have children, you can adopt or work in the nursery, and I bet it will show up in you too.)

Almost every night when my children were little, I’d go into their rooms and just watch them sleep, captivated by the sheer wonder of their mere existence. I remember thinking over and over, “How could I ever not love you?” Well . . . now they’re teenagers. They have conditions, successes, failures, good days, bad days . . . but all I have to do is remember they are still at least that baby—that miracle, and then they’re more than easy to love.

Do you realize that God the Father sees all your life at once? He’s not stuck in time. Well, a good daddy sees the unconditional miracle that is his children.

So good daddy love is **unconditional**. You can make God glad, sad, and angry, but you can’t make God love you any more or any less than He does right now. He *is*

love, and that love is already complete. It's daddy love.

So good daddy love is unique, unearned, unconditional, and **intensely passionate**.

One day when Elizabeth was about three, I took her to the park. She had learned to go down the slide. She'd stand on top and say, "See? I do it! See?" I'd say, "Oh, yes, that's awesome!" And it was awesome.

Well, after a while I went and sat down and watched, amazed at the sheer wonder of her existence. Then this woman and her daughter came along and started using the slide as well. So this mother would watch her little girl saying, "Great job!" and praise her as she came down the slide. But she didn't notice Elizabeth.

After a while, Elizabeth stood at the top of the slide and said, "See me, see me, I do it, I do it!" And this lady didn't notice.

We're each so much like Elizabeth in a million ways. We say to the world, "See me, see me, see me!" and the world ignores us or says, "Yeah, so what?" But not the Father. *He sees*.

Well, finally Elizabeth was just yelling at this lady. "See me! See me! I do it!" but this lady wouldn't even look at my daughter. I'm watching this and growing furious. I remember fantasizing about picking up a board and smacking this lady in the head and yelling, "Look at my daughter! Not since the world began has anyone slid down a slide as well as my daughter!"

People say they don't understand the wrath of God. *I do*. Every good daddy does. It's the fluid love bleeds.

I was burning with wrath and just about to go over there and judge her when I sensed God's whisper:

Hey, Peter, what if that lady at the foot of the slide is *my* little girl, just like Elizabeth is *your* little girl? What if every child starving in Africa is my child? What if every kid living in the dump in Tijuana is my child too? They cry, "See me! See me! Feed me! Feed me!" and you don't even look. You should drop to your knees in gratitude that I have turned my white hot wrath upon myself at the cross, instead of upon you. For you see, Peter, I love you in this way too.

What if God loves everyone in the world the way I love my daughter? And yet everyone in the world refuses to see each other? What does the good Father do with His wrath? He issues judgment but bears the judgment Himself.

Daddy love is: unique, unearned, unconditional, intense, **sacrificial**. His love makes Him **vulnerable** to you.

I'm most vulnerable to the people I love. Who can hurt me most? Jonathan, Elizabeth, Becky, Coleman, and my bride. Who can hurt God most? *You*. It wasn't nails that held Him to that cross.

Daddy love is vulnerable, and it never comes to an end. Wrath comes to an end. Revelation 15:1: "With this the wrath of God is ended." But "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, and His mercies never come to an end." It may seem like they do, but that's because good daddies are willing to discipline, even very severely. Yet all the discipline is *love*.

When my son Jon was about four, a man came over to fix the furnace. We went downstairs. Jon watched as he adjusted the burner; then Jon turned to me in obvious distress and said, “What’s that?” I said, “Well, those flames heat the water in our house.” (Actually, it was the furnace, not the water heater, but that’s what I said.)

Over the next few days, we noticed that Jon started having accidents, wetting his pants and dirtying his underwear. And then he refused to take a bath. When we inquired as to why, he told us, “The flames will come up and burn me!”

We tried explaining. Grandma even came over and put her hand in the toilet, but it didn’t do any good. Terror had imprisoned my son in a lie.

Finally, Susan and I sat down, had a conversation, and issued judgment. That night when I could tell he was loaded, I took him by the hand, screaming and crying, and I held him to “the flaming toilet of death.” Few times in my life have I ever seen such a face of absolute terror. But I held him there until the deed was done.

You know, God can teach you things in the strangest places. Scripture says, “God disciplines those He loves.” So He will literally hold us to the fire and burn us right down to faith. Scripture says our faith is tested like gold refined by fire.

Do you understand? I held Jon to that toilet *because* I loved him. I wanted him to share my joy one day: a wife, a family, clean underwear . . .

Jon is eighteen now, and I want you to know that perfect love has cast out fear. He will sit on the toilet for *hours* without fear.

But now imagine if someone counseled Jon during that time. Imagine if they said:

Jon, you’d better fear your daddy, because he will not let you live in your own filth. As long as you keep pooing your pants, your dad will come hold you to the toilet. You can’t escape his punishment or hide from his judgment. If you’re sixty years old, hiding in a cave in Alaska but still pooing your pants, your eighty-seven-year-old daddy will hunt you down, find a toilet, and hold you to it! Fear him because he loves you, and his love will not stop.

Well, that would have been some good counsel. But now imagine if someone else came along and whispered this in his ear:

Jonathan, you’d better fear your daddy because one day his love will stop. His patience will run out, and then he’ll punish you. He will torment and torture you forever without end. And if you cry out for mercy, there will be no mercy. It’s *too late*. His mercy has come to an end.¹

Well, if someone whispered that in my son’s ear, my son would obey me, he’d honor me with his lips, but his heart would be far, far from me. It’s hard to think of something that would be more damaging to my son’s faith in me and my heart.

Sometimes we say stuff like that, but if God’s love is daddy love, we ought to at least ask some clarifying questions.

And make no mistake: All Scripture is true. So there is a hell (Hades), and people go there. It may last as long as time itself. There are many biblical ways to talk about it. But any time our talk limits the extent, duration, and power of God’s mercy, then we’re on very shaky ground. For God Himself *is* mercy (“khesed,” steadfast love). Scripture

says, “His mercies never come to an end” and “The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.” That phrase is repeated something like eighty-eight times in Scripture. The love of God is **relentless**. Good daddy love is relentless, **empathetic**, and **compassionate**.

When Coleman was little, we’d punish him by making him sit on the green couch. Sometimes he’d do something bad and just go sit on the green couch on his

own. I’d find him there and say, “Coleman, what did you do?” And he’d confess.

Well, Coleman spent a lot of time on the green couch . . . and *I* spent a lot of time on the green couch with him. I’d go there just to be with him.

“The day you eat of it, you will surely die,” says God the Father. And then in Jesus He chooses to die with us and for us, just to be with us.

Good daddy love is unique, unearned, unconditional, intensely passionate, sacrificial, relentless, empathetic, and compassionate. It **seeks the heart**. Good daddy love **desires faith**.

Last year I told you how my dear wife obtained a book called *Potty Training in a Day*. She informed me that because I shared similar plumbing with my son Jon, I should be the instructor. She took baby Elizabeth and went shopping for the day, leaving me alone with my little boy Jonathan and my own phobia of human waste material.

Well, of course, Jon had an accident—a sizeable one. And it was my job to take him into the bathroom and make him sit on the potty anyway, as a form of discipline.

He was wearing a white shirt and underwear. I stood him in the bathroom, pulled down his shorts, turned to get paper or something, and then I saw this out of the corner of my eye: Little Jon looked right, looked left, and then he bent down and grabbed the accident with his hand (the physical expression of our sin nature). He grabbed it and hurled it at the toilet. It hit the lifted lid, plopped off, and went into the bowl. Two points!

He turned and looked at me. His eyes lit up. He was thrilled over his gift for me. Then he took his filthy hand and wiped it across his white shirt several times, smiling the whole time as if to say, “Daddy, look! I did it for you! Aren’t you proud of me?” He stood before the throne, eyes shining at me. “Aren’t you proud of me?” And I was. Perhaps never more so. That was my judgment.

See, I got what I really wanted: my son’s heart, as he stood there in filth and faith. I would bear the filth to destruction in the laundry room, and I would treasure the faith as the most priceless gift: my love returning to me through my son as faith.

Now, we would have setbacks, like “the flaming toilet of death,” but like a mustard seed that faith would grow into a kingdom.

Daddy love desires faith, and faith is “reckoned as righteousness.” Faith is *rightness*.

So your Heavenly Father delights in the scribbles you call art. Even though He made the Grand Canyon, He puts your drawing on His refrigerator.

Although He can listen to countless choirs of angels, He listens to you sing, because you sing in faith. And He doesn’t notice you’re off-key.

You’re His kid.

You're His priority.

I grew up in a busy church with a busy and important pastor. He didn't have enough time for everyone's needs, but any time I had a need, he'd drop everything just for me. I had the key to his office; I'd go in whenever I chose; I had the pastor wrapped around my little finger. Why? Because I was the best parishioner? No. I made the Sunday School teacher quit. My initials were carved in the pew in the balcony. It wasn't because I was the best parishioner; it was because the pastor was my daddy.

So our relationship was more important than any institution, including the church, or maybe I should say it *was* church. The children of God *are* the Church, so God is your Daddy. His love is **primary**. So you are His priority. He is all about *you*.

- He watches you when you sleep.
- Your picture is in His wallet.
- Your scribbles are on His refrigerator.
- He dreams your dreams, laughs at your stupid jokes, and cries your tears.

I remember lying in a hospital bed in fourth grade, recovering from extensive knee surgery. It was the worst pain I have ever endured. My father leaned over the side of the bed, and with the most intense, compassionate, and serious look he said, "Oh, Peter, I wish there was some way I could take your place." I remember looking back at my father and thinking this: "You're nuts! What on earth could possess you to will such a thing?"

Daddy love. Now I know. I've felt it for my kids, not as a burden, but as a privilege.

And your Heavenly Father is capable of all things. He not only wishes to take your pain; He *did* in Jesus. He bore the cross and endured hell on your behalf. Is He crazy? Yes! Crazy with a Father's love for you.

Daddy love is unique, unearned, unconditional, intensely passionate, sacrificial, vulnerable, relentless, and it seeks the heart. It endures all things. The good daddy "**bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.**"

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has given to us!"

So what does the good Father want more than anything? He wants you to behold His love.

The greatest gift a child can give a father is to receive and believe his love. When my kids were little, it was the moment they'd set down their toys and come sit on my lap. Now it's the moment they say, "Dad, I need you. Help me."

The greatest pain is when they don't trust my love.

Years ago Elizabeth was having a bad day. She was mean to everyone. At dinner, I parked the van and sent everyone inside except Elizabeth. "What's gotten into you?" I asked. She looked at me and said, "I know, but I'm not telling you."

So I just loved on her. The spankings hadn't worked. (Scripture says, "It's his kindness that leads us to repentance.") Finally, she cracked.

She said, "Remember when you came to my kindergarten class?"

I said, "Yeah."

"Remember Kelly?"

"Yeah." She had just glommed onto me.

"She said you said you didn't love me . . . you loved her!" And she broke down sobbing.

I said, "Elizabeth, does Kelly have a daddy?"

"Yeah . . . he just moved away from Kelly and her mommy."

"Elizabeth, I will always love you, and that will *never* change. Please don't doubt my love for you. It hurts me. And when you do doubt, come to me so I can tell you again: I love you."

I had asked, "What's gotten into you?" It was the lie from hell. You have an enemy that whispers in your ear, "The Father doesn't love you. He says He does, but He doesn't really. Honor Him with your lips but keep your heart far from Him."

So renounce that voice and take time every day to simply behold your Father's love for you. Take time.

- Not praying through a list
- Not making resolutions
- Not promising anything
- Not intending anything

. . . but just considering, enjoying, abiding in the fact that your Daddy is completely, furiously, passionately in love with you *right now*, right here, as you are, without accomplishing a thing.

If you want to have to achieve something

If you want to have to strive for something

If you want to have to earn something . . .

. . . you've missed it and you're not beholding it. You can't change in order to receive daddy love, but you receive it and it will change you.

The Father's love creates us in His image.

I John 3:1:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! . . . And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

This is how the Apostle Paul put it in Ephesians: "Be imitators of God as beloved children." Believe you are beloved children, and you will imitate God. Kids don't *try*; it's their nature.

As a new parent, that shocked me and got me in trouble. My kids imitated everything. They wrote sermons and played church. At Sunday school, Jon would say,

“Hey, I gotta hock a loogie and take a leak,” and *I* would get in trouble.

Sometimes people ask me, “Why are you a pastor?” Well, I think mostly it’s because I’m imitating my dad. He was a pastor. But even more, maybe I’m trying to explain my dad or what I beheld in my dad. He was never famous; he never wrote a book; his churches were never huge; he was let go by two of them. But he loved me. And the love was not of this world.

“Love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.”

Well, I’m saying daddy love validates us, creates us, and shapes us in its image. Daddy love is incredibly powerful stuff. Psychologists say that parents (fathers) shape our world, shape reality and how we relate to reality, even when we don’t want them to. So by the age of three, your view of reality is already shaped. You can’t help it. To unlearn it, you’d have to be, like . . . born again.

And so for some, reality has been hellishly bleak.

For some, this sermon has been incredibly painful.

For some, your story is not like mine but like Ben Hooper.

Perhaps your father made you hate yourself.

Perhaps your father betrayed, molested, or abused you.

And now the horror of it all is that you look in the mirror and see your father. Your father haunts you.

I heard my aunt tell about a man she knew born in 1919. He grew up in the Depression. His father failed two or three businesses, turned to alcohol, and became abusive, especially to the sisters in the family of fifteen. When the boy stood up for his sisters, his brothers would call him a sissy.

One night, the boy awoke out of a sound sleep to hear screaming and yelling. He ran downstairs to see his father, drunk, waving a rifle. His mother was hanging onto the butt of the rifle screaming, “No! Stop!” while the father yelled, “I’m gonna kill ‘em! I’m gonna kill all them sons of bitches!”

It only stopped because the boy’s brother ran barefoot through the frozen fields of Nebraska to the neighbor’s house and called the police. The police came and took his daddy away.

Now, psychologists would tell you that boy would very likely grow up to be like his father. Children can’t help imitating their parents. Their world is shaped by their family system. Very likely he would be abusive, cruel, and limited in his ability to love.

But that boy is the most compassionate, loving, kind man I’ve ever known. That boy is my daddy. I hear those stories and I’m shocked at who he is. He really is rather different from his family.

What happened? The same thing that happened to Ben Hooper. The same thing that happened to Paul, “chief of sinners.” The same thing that happened to John, Son of Thunder. By the power of Jesus, when he was nineteen, here in Denver before World War II, my daddy met his true Father. He heard the judgment; he heard the Word; he heard the preacher say, “Boy, I know who your daddy is. Your daddy is God.” My father believed that judgment and claimed that inheritance.

Your daddy is God.

Imagine yourself as a five-year-old standing in the dark alone. In your arms are all your toys (possessions, accomplishments, judgments, unforgiveness, fears, failures). You hold them as security against the darkness. You think they tell you who you are.

Now listen: Boy . . . girl . . . I know who your daddy is. Your Daddy is *God*.

Two hands now reach down in the darkness. There are nail prints in the hands. You drop your toys. Imagine Him picking you up and holding you in His lap. Don't promise anything. Don't vow anything. Don't hide anything. Don't say anything. Just stay there and behold His love. Listen to the Word of the Father.

“Love Song”

by Third Day

I've heard a tale that a man would climb a mountain
Just to be with the one he loves.
How many times has he broken that promise?
It has never been done
Well I never climbed the highest mountain,
But I walked the hill of Calvary

And just to be with you I'll do anything,
There's no price I would not pay, no
Just to be with you I will give everything.
I would give my life away.

I've heard it said that a man would swim an ocean
Just to be with the one he loves.
But all of those dreams are an empty emotion
It can never be done.
Well I never swam the deepest ocean
But I walked upon the raging sea

And just to be with you I'll do anything,
There's no price I would not pay, no

And just to be with you I would give everything.
I would give my life away.

And I know that you don't understand
The fullness of my love
How I died upon the Cross for your sin
And I know that you don't realize

How much that I give you
And I promise I would do it all again

Just to be with you I've done everything
There's no price I did not pay, no
Just to be with you I gave everything
Yes I gave my life away.

Just to be with you
Oh, just to be with you

So on the night He was betrayed, the Word of the Father from the bosom of the Father took bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given to you. Take and eat."

And in the same manner after supper, He took the cup and said, "This is the cup of the new covenant. It's an eternal covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it, all of you. Do it in remembrance of me." That is: "Behold what manner of love the Father has given us."

So He invites you to come to His table, tear off a piece of the bread, and dip it in the cup. They're both love for you in Jesus. Amen.

God is good. He really, really is. So if you think, "God is so good I just want to do something for Him," what does He want? I think first He wants you to *stop* . . . and behold what manner of love He has given to you. Just rest in it. Consider it. Behold it.

Maybe you can imagine yourself climbing up on His lap. If that's a struggle for you, ask Him to help you. Maybe you need to forgive your earthly father . . . let him off the hook. He can't be God for you. Just talk to God. He looks different for different people. Maybe it's just taking some time to sit down and read Scripture. If there's part you don't understand, don't worry about it. Did you understand your dad when you were four years old? But you knew he was your dad. Maybe it means going for a walk and thanking God for all He has made. "And you love me? Wow!" Maybe it's meditating on your kids. But take some time to behold what manner of love He has given to you. Maybe it means telling God you're kind of disappointed in Him. He already knows. You can pound on His chest. Just tell Him.

Endnotes

¹Perhaps they'd go on to say, "Indeed, as we speak your father has other children. He keeps them in a shed out back, and every night he tortures them in wrath. He tortures them until they die, and he resurrects them to torture them again. It's a living death, and he will continue without end. His wrath endures forever, for his mercy has come to an end."

Perhaps this person is more of a Calvinist than an Armenian, so he whispers: "It's not that his mercy came to an end; it's that he never gave it in the first place. And so he's chosen to torture your brothers and sisters forever without end so that you'd know he's holy, and you'd be grateful he has chosen not to torture you. So fear him, for his mercy extends to only a few."

We say things like that, and either way we argue that God's mercy is limited in extent or duration. Yet God is mercy, and I'm called to glorify Him in the hope that people would put their faith in Him and His heart (Jesus from the bosom of the Father).

Well, if someone whispered those things in my son's ear, I can think of nothing that would anger me more, for it would destroy his faith in me and my heart. And every time I'd discipline him, he'd hide his heart in terror.

I John 3:1 ought to make us ask some hard questions about our doctrines, not because God is a daddy like me or us, but because God is a Daddy infinitely better than me or us.

Relevant Texts and Quotations (from bulletin)

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

~ 1 John 3:1-3

Consider the incredible love that the Father has shown us in allowing us to be called "children of God"—and that is not just what we are called, but what we are. Our heredity on the Godward side is no mere figure of speech—which explains why the world will no more recognise us than it recognised Christ. Oh, dear

children of mine (forgive the affection of an old man!), have you realised it? Here and now we are God's children. We don't know what we shall become in the future. We only know that, if reality were to break through, we should reflect his likeness, for we should see him as he really is! Everyone who has at heart a hope like that keeps himself pure, for he knows how pure Christ is.

~ 1 John 3:1-3 (J. B. Phillips)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

~ Galatians 4:4-7

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

~ Romans 8:14-16 (RSV)

Through the Spirit we can feel such a closeness with God that we can actually call God "Daddy." This relationship, as it is discussed by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:15, was so awesome to the King James translators of the Bible that they left the word "Abba" untranslated. But scholars agree that "Abba" should have been translated "Daddy." It is a shame that it was not. That translation would have helped us all to understand in a fuller way what the Holy Spirit accomplished in the way of establishing a new relationship with God for those who want to receive it.

~ Tony Campolo,

How to be Pentecostal Without Speaking in Tongues

Jewish prayers on the one hand do not contain a single example of *abba* as an address for God; Jesus on the other hand always used it when he prayed (with the exception of the cry from the cross, Mark 15:34). This means that we here have an unequivocal characteristic of the unique way in which Jesus expressed himself, of his *ipissima vox*.

The reason why Jewish prayers do not address God as *Abba* is disclosed when one considers the linguistic background of the word. Originally, *abba* was a babbling sound. The Talmud says: "When a child experiences the taste of wheat (that is, when it is weaned) it learns to say *abba* and *imma*" (that is, Dada and Mama are the first words which it utters); and the church fathers Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyrus, all three of them born in Antioch of well-to-do parents, but in all probability raised by Syrian nurses, tell us out of their own experience that little children used to call their fathers *abba*. . . . Grown-up sons and daughters called their fathers *abba* as well (cp. Luke 15.21), and only on formal occasions resorted to "Sir" (Kyrie) (cp. Matt. 21.29 [30]). But in spite of this development the origin of the word in the language of infants never falls into oblivion.

We are now in a position to say why *abba* is not used in Jewish prayers as an address to God: to a Jewish mind, it would have been irreverent and therefore unthinkable to call God by this familiar word. . . . *Abba*, then, is a word which conveys revelation. It represents the centre of Jesus' awareness of his mission. . . . He gives them this address [The Lord's Prayer] as the token of their discipleship. By the authorization that they, too, may invoke God as *Abba*, he lets them participate in his own communion with God. He even goes as far as to say that only he who can repeat this childlike *Abba* shall enter into the kingdom of God. This address, *Abba*, when spoken by the disciples, is a sharing in the revelation, it is actualized eschatology. It is the presence of the kingdom even here, even now. It is a fulfillment, granted in advance, of the promise:

I shall be their father and they my children.

*They all shall be called children of
the living God. (Jubilees 1.24f.)*

~ Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 20, 21, 27, 28-29

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name."

~ Matthew 6:9

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

~ *Matthew 11:27-28*

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. . . . No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.

~ *John 1:14, 18 (RSV)*

The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

~ *John 17:22-23*

Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

~ *John 20:17*

And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."

~ *Acts 17:26-28*

God's fatherly mercy exceeds all human comprehension:

*Is Ephraim my dear son?
Is he my darling child? . . .
Therefore my heart yearns for him;
I must have mercy on him, says the Lord.*

(Jer. 31.20)

This is the final word of the Old Testament with regard to divine fatherhood: the "must" of God's incomprehensible mercy and forgiveness. . . . God's fatherly love is his first and his last word, however great the children's guilt may be.

~ *Joachim Jeremias, The Central Message of the New Testament, pp. 14, 15*

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. . . . For the Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

~ *Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-33*

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever. . . .

~ *Psalms 103:8-9 (NIV)*

And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the Lord and praise him in holy attire, as they went before the army, and say, "Give thanks to the Lord, for his steadfast love endures forever."

~ *2 Chronicles 20:21*

And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as

sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness.

~ *Hebrews 12:5-10*

Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.... he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.

~ *Revelation 15:1, 21:4 (RSV)*

Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love (Khesed: Mercy [in the KJV, NKJV] lovingkindness, unfailing kindness, covenant love, steadfast love) endures forever. Give thanks to the God of gods, for his steadfast love endures forever. Give thanks to the Lord of lords, for his steadfast love endures forever. . . .

~ *Psalms 136:1-3*

(This phrase "The steadfast love of the Lord endures forever" is repeated 88 times in scripture.)

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

~ *1 Corinthians 13:7-8a*

Love never fails.

~ *1 Corinthians 13:8a (NIV)*

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

~ *1 John 4:16*

The greatest danger for a child, where religion is concerned, is not that his father or teacher should be an unbeliever, not even his being a hypocrite. No, the danger lies in their being pious and God-fearing, and in the child being convinced thereof, but that he should nevertheless notice that deep within there lies hidden a terrible unrest. The danger is that the child is provoked to draw a conclusion about God, that God is not infinite love.

~ *Soren Kierkegaard, Provocations*

Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness. . . .

~ *Romans 4:4-5*

And without faith it is impossible to please him. . . .

~ *Hebrews 11:6*

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.

~ *Ephesians 5:1*

Dads,

Dads that are always there for you

Dads that will kiss you before bed

Dads that teach you how to be brave

Dads that will be there to go on the big rides

Dads that are there when you come home from school saying, "Daddy, the bully beat me up,"

he says, "I love you, Elizabeth."

Dads, if they were not here the world would be blank.

~ *Elizabeth Hiatt (written a long time ago)*

Who's Your Daddy?

I John 3:1-3

Pastor Peter Hiatt

August 19, 2007

© 2007 Peter Hiatt

Lookout Mountain Community Church

534 Commons Drive, Golden CO 80401

Phone: 303-526-9287 Fax: 303-526-9361

E-mail: info@lomcc.org