

## Our Image of God

### Where do we get our image of God the Father?

- Our fathers
  - Imperfect. Maybe harsh, distant, judging, hard to live up to expectations. Even really good dads are not God.
- Sermons
  - God looking to judge, He is to be feared, Destroyer of the world...
- Misinterpreting experiences
  - Consequences of our actions ascribed to God, Natural disasters, sickness, disease, deaths

### Where should we get our image of God the Father?

From Scripture:

- **1 John 4:8** Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.
- **Exodus 34:5-7a** The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. <sup>6</sup> The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, <sup>7</sup> keeping steadfast love for thousands forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin."
- **2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

His Names (which are also in Scripture):

- Jehovah Jireh: The LORD our provider
- Jehovah Rapha: The LORD our Healer
- Jehovah Nissi: The LORD our Banner
- Jehovah Shalom: The LORD our Peace

- Jehovah Raah: The LORD our Shepherd
- Jehovah Tsidkenu: The LORD our Righteousness
- Jehovah Shammah: The LORD is Here
- And so many more!!!

By watching and listening to Jesus, His Son:

- **John 14: 9-10** Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in Me does His works."
- Jesus is the exact representation of the Father.
- Some think God is an angry God and Jesus is the merciful, kind one standing in the gap between us and God assuaging His anger.
  - **John 3:16** For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.
  - God was motivated by love.
- If you want to know the Father, look at the Son.
- So, if Jesus is just like His Father, what do we see in Jesus?
  - Unconditional love
  - Accepting even with failure and sin, but brings power to change us
  - Compassion
  - Forgiving
  - Truthful
  - Kind
  - Full of grace
  - Joyful
  - So much more!!!

**Jesus' Baptism shows us the Father's Love**

- **Matthew 3:16-17** When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. <sup>17</sup> And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying“ ,This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”.

We see three things from God in this passage:

- God gave Jesus a gift
- God loves His Son
- God proudly proclaimed His love publicly for His Son

What had Jesus done at this point in His life to deserve this?

- Nothing. No miracles, no healings, no sermons, no dead raised.
- He was His Son. That is all.
- What about us? We are His children, co-heirs with Christ.
- It is the same for us.
- It was out of unconditional love. And He says the same thing about each of us.

“Look at My daughter, isn’t she awesome.

I love you My daughter.”

“Look at My boy, I delight in him.

I love you, son.”

Have you ever heard Him say this to you?

Can you believe He would say that about you?

Can you believe you are His precious treasure?

## **The Prodigal Son**

**Luke 15:11-24** Then He said: “A certain man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to *his* father‘ ,Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me.*’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood .<sup>13</sup> And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there

wasted his possessions with prodigal living. <sup>14</sup> But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. <sup>15</sup> Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. <sup>16</sup> And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*. <sup>17</sup> "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.'"

<sup>20</sup> "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be merry; <sup>24</sup> for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.

### **The Younger Son:**

- Wanted his inheritance earlier. This is like saying to your father, "I wish you would die so I can have your stuff," or "You are more valuable to me dead than alive."
- He left his father and family. He turned his back on them.
- He pursued things that he thought would make him happy. Ultimately things that would fulfill his needs for love, acceptance, worth and security.
- When his needs began to be unfulfilled, it felt as though his life was falling apart.
- He remembered his father, but only his father as a provider. Did he really know his father?
- He felt shame and unworthiness for his failures.

- But he still returned to his father.

### **The Father**

- Allowed his sons to make their own choices.
- He welcomed back the younger son without judgment.
- He was waiting for him, and noticed him from a great way off.
- He had sufficient resources for all.
- He had compassion.
- He dismissed his son's guilt and unworthiness without a thought.
- He celebrated where his son is now, instead of looking at what he had done.

**Luke 15:25-32** "Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.'

<sup>28</sup> "But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> So he answered and said to *his* father, 'Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.'

<sup>31</sup> "And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.'"

### **The Older Brother**

- He was faithful.
- He never wandered off.
- He kept the law — never transgressed.
- His relationship with his father was a relationship built on obedience.
- He was jealous.

- He did not understand his position as son. He did not know what he had access to.
- All that is the father's is his, but he never lived like it.
- He also could use a homecoming.

### **The Father**

- Allowed his sons to make their own choices.
- The father noticed the older son's absence from the celebration.
- The father did not make excuses, but said what was being done was right.
- But he also explained that the older son has had access to everything all along.

The Father is waiting for us to come home, no matter where we are. He does not look at our shame or condemnation. That is not who He is.

**Romans 8:1** There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

He runs to us to welcome us home.

He desires to lavish His love on us.

He allows us to live as we choose, as a son or daughter, as an obedient servant, or as estranged.

**Be a son or daughter.**