

Sunday Bible Study Lesson:
The Names and Attributes of God: Father
October 18, 2020

Elohim is the Hebrew word for God that appears in the very first sentence of the Bible. This ancient name for God contains the idea of His creative power as well as His authority and sovereignty. So, *Elohim* could be translated “God, Mighty Creator.” The name *Yahweh* is the sacred, personal name of Israel’s God, and it is most closely linked with God’s redeeming acts to save His people. The name was eventually spoken aloud only by priests worshiping in the Jerusalem temple. However, after the destruction of the temple in AD 70, the name was not pronounced at all.

This background information is important because when Jesus claimed that He had a Father/Son relationship with the God whose name the religious leaders feared to pronounce, Jesus shocked and offended them.

In **Luke 15**, Jesus tells 3 parables. Read **Luke 15:1-3**. Who was Jesus speaking to when he told the 3 earthly stories with heavenly meanings? _____

Prayer: Heavenly Father, although the parable of the wayward son is very familiar to me, I ask you to open my heart as I read it. Holy Spirit, please make the passage come alive for me today. Help me to internalize the truths in this parable so that I can apply them to my own life. Please give me understanding as well as opportunities to share the truths of this passage with others. In Jesus’ name and in the power of the Holy Spirit I pray. Amen.

Read Luke 15:11-32.

“Jesus offers both a stunning portrait of a father who responds to the appalling behavior of two sons in ways no Middle Eastern patriarch would have. In Jesus’ time the Jewish community had a way of punishing sons who lost the family inheritance, squandering it among Gentiles. Angry villagers would gather together to conduct what was known as a qetsatsah ceremony, a ritual that consisted of filling a large pot with burned nuts and burned corn and then breaking it in front of the guilty party. As the earthenware pot shattered, the villagers would shout: “So-and-so is cut off from his people.” That would be the cue for the errant son to get out of town for good. Remarkably, the father in Jesus’ story failed to act as His listeners expected. Instead of waiting at home for his wayward son to come crawling back, as any dignified Middle Eastern father would have done, the father in Jesus’ story keeps a lookout for him. As soon as he spots him, he runs out and throws his arms around his wayward son, showering him with kisses. By acting quickly and with so much tenderness, the father effectively prevents his neighbors from organizing a qetsatsah ceremony to cut off his son” (From *Praying the Names of God* by Ann Spangler)

How have you experienced the kind of grace (undeserved favor) this father offers to his son? If so, describe the experience here:

Why do you think the wayward son fails to offer to become one of his father's hired servants, as he had planned? _____

But what of the older son, angered by his father's acceptance of his foolish younger brother? Once again, Jesus depicts the father in a way that would have surprised His listeners. Instead of slapping his son and publicly rebuking him for refusing to attend the celebration, the father humbles himself by leaving the feast in order to reach out to his angry son.

How is grace offered to the lawbreaker in this story? _____

What do you think the tax collectors and sinners would have thought about the father's actions? _____

How is grace offered to the law-keeper in this story? _____

What do you think the Pharisees and scribes would have thought about the father's actions? _____

With whom do you identify in this story? Why? _____

Jesus does not tell us how the older son responded to his father's explanation. Why do you think He leaves the story open-ended? _____

What does the parable reveal about our heavenly Father?

The first recorded words of Jesus were spoken to his earthly parents. Read **Luke 2:41-49** and write Jesus' words here: _____

The most frequent term for "father" in the New Testament was the Greek word *pater*. In John's gospel, Jesus calls God His Father 156 times. Furthermore, by inviting His followers to call God "Father," He made this the primary name by which God is to be known to his followers. As you read **Matthew 6:1-15**, notice how many times Jesus refers to the Father. What does Jesus reveal about the Father in this passage?

Because of Jesus, we can boldly pray the prayer He taught His disciples. Jesus also addressed God as *Abba*, the Aramaic word for "Daddy," which gradually came to mean "dear father." The expression "*Abba, Pater*" (AB-ba pa-TAIR) is found 3 times in the New Testament.

Read **Mark 14:32-36**. What was the occasion for this anguished heart cry?

Read **Romans 8:14-16**. What does Paul tell us about a believer's relationship with God?

Read **Galatians 4:4-7**. What do you learn in this passage?

What do the passages in Romans and Galatians mean to you personally?

Dear Father,

Thank you for treating me not as I deserve to be treated but as a child worthy of your faithful, fatherly love. Father, thank you for loving me even when I was “still a long way off.” You showed your gracious, fatherly love even when I bore little resemblance to you. Strengthen my identity as your child and help me to glorify your name by reflecting your character. In Jesus' Name, Amen.