

God Is Our Perfect Father

Lesson 1: God's Love

Vocabulary:

almighty	clay	cheater	mercy
everlasting	potter	superstition	to forgive
savior	distant	idol	perfect
force	to doubt	greedy	punishment
to imagine	sin	arrogant	pleasant
describe	murderer	to beg	(un)faithful

Discussion:

The Bible has many names for God – King of Kings, Lord of Lords, **Almighty** God, Creator, **Everlasting** God, **Savior**. When we think of these names, we might think of God as a power, a strong **force**, a ruler, a judge, one who is feared. Some people think of God as an old man or as a great light from heaven.

When you hear the name “God,” what do you **imagine**? How would you **describe** God?

In the Old Testament, some of the prophets called God a *Father*. Written during the seventh century B.C.E., Isaiah the prophet wrote, “But, Lord, you are our Father. We are like **clay**, and you are the **potter**. Your hands made us all” (Isaiah 64:8-9, ESV). The fifth century B.C.E prophet Malachi wrote, “We all have the same Father. The same God made every one of us” (Malachi 2:10, ESV). Isaiah and Malachi call God our Father because God is our Creator. He made us with his own hands.

In the New Testament, Jesus prayed to God using the name, *Abba*, an Aramaic term that when translated can mean *father*, *papa*, or even *daddy*. In other words, Jesus didn't just see God as his Creator; he saw God as his true Father, his dad, his papa. Jesus turned to his dad with all his needs, questions, and thoughts every day. He spoke to God in the same way that he would speak to his own dad.

Do you ever think of God as Abba, your true Father, dad, or papa? Why or why not?

The idea that God is somehow our Abba, our dad or papa, brings God near to us. As our Father, God does not want to be **distant** or far away from his children. He cares for our thoughts, our feelings, our lives. It's hard to feel close to a force, a power, a king, or a judge. These are images we fear. In the New Testament, John, a follower and friend of Jesus, wrote that “God is love” (1 John 4:16, NIV). The one word that best describes God is *love*. The Bible is the story of God's love for you and His desire to have a close relationship with you.

Do you feel God's love in your life? Explain. In what ways do you **doubt** God's love for you?

In the Old Testament, Isaiah describes his fear of God the Father when he writes, “But, Lord, you are our Father. We are like clay, and you are the potter. Your hands made us all. Lord, don't continue to be

angry with us! Don't remember our **sins** forever! Please, look at us! We are all your people" (Isaiah 64:8-9, ERV).

Isaiah was a prophet among the Israelites, God's people. The Israelites had turned away from God. They were sinning by not caring for people who were hurting. They had become **murderers** and **cheaters**. They had turned to **superstitions** and to **idols**, not trusting God as their Father. They became **greedy** and **arrogant**. In all of this, Isaiah knew that God was angry with the people. He **begged** God for help and for **mercy**, but he was afraid that God would not **forgive** them. We've all felt afraid of another person. We usually don't feel close to people who make us feel afraid. In the same way, it's hard to feel close to God when we are afraid of Him.

Do you ever feel afraid of God? If yes, is there a reason why you feel that way? How does your fear of God keep you from feeling close to Him?

When we think of God, we can sometimes feel afraid about what He is thinking or feeling about us. Will He forgive us? Is He angry with us? Jesus's friend John shows us that we can't feel close to God while we live in fear of Him when he says, "There is no fear in love. But **perfect** love [takes away] fear because fear has to do with **punishment**" (I John 4:18, NIV). The good news is that God doesn't want us to be afraid of Him. In the sixth century B.C.E., God tells the prophet Jeremiah the kind of relationship He wants to have with us:

This message is from the Lord: I want to treat you like my own children. I want to give you a **pleasant** land, a land more beautiful than any other nation. I thought you would call me 'Father.' I thought you would always follow me...The people of Israel are crying and praying for mercy. They became very evil. They forgot their God... Come back to me and I will forgive you for being **unfaithful**. (Jeremiah 3:19-20, ERV)

Look at each sentence in this passage. What does God want in our relationship with Him? How does this passage make you feel?

God gave us the Bible to learn about Him, His love, His forgiveness, and His desire to be with us forever. God wants us to know Him, to feel His love in our life, and to be close to Him. We can read the Bible to learn more about who God is, how He loves us, and what He desires for our lives.

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Take some time and make a list of what you want in the perfect father.
2. Close your eyes and try to imagine God as your Father. What do you see, hear, or imagine?
3. If you could talk to God about anything, what would you talk about? What questions would you ask Him? What would you say to Him?
4. If God your Father were to speak to you today, what do you think He would say to you?
5. In the New Testament, you will find the books I John, II John, and III John. Read I John 4:7-21. What do you learn about God in this chapter? What does God want from us? Write your answers.