

Personal Devotional

(by Crystal Craig)

"This, then, is how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name..."
— **Matthew 6:9**

"The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."
— **Romans 8: 15b-16**

Abba, Father

In an ideal world, a child should be able to crawl into his dad's lap when he's scared or stressed and feel safer for it. A child should be able to sit with her father and pour out her heart's concerns while he listens. A child should be able to make a mistake and still feel a father's love.

But not every child grows up with a father who protects, guides, and loves unconditionally. Some grow up in neglectful, abusive, and emotionally unhealthy environments, and some children grow up with no father at all.

How then, do we recognize God the Father?

Subconsciously, we try to squeeze God into a fatherly mold that we recognize: critical and controlling, gentle and patient, hard to please and distant, loving and forgiving. But God will never fit into those molds because they are shaped around imperfect people who are prone to mistakes and sin.

God is the perfect balance of what a father *should be*, the original and flawless mold. We need to learn to see Him for the amazing Father He is, and not just as an echo of a flawed human being. God, our Father, will never abandon us (Deut. 31:6). He will comfort us when we are broken-hearted and distraught (2 Cor. 1:3-4). He will love us always (1. John 4:19) and He will rejoice over us (Zeph. 3:17) because we are precious to Him.

Self-Reflection

- How would you describe your relationship with your **earthly** father?
- How would you describe your relationship with your **Heavenly** Father?
 - Do you feel like God is present and active in your life or distant?
 - Do you feel you can come to God when you need help or guidance, or do you feel your requests and problems might be a bother to Him?
 - Do you struggle to understand His love for you?
 - Do you worry you might say or do something to make Him love you less?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, show me who you are. Help me to understand that you are greater than any father I have ever known, that I can come to you at any hour with any need, because you eagerly await that time with me. Remind me that your love is unconditional, and that there is nothing I can say or do to **ever** lose it. You are a good and perfect Father. Amen.