

Introduction:

- Opening comments.
 - Father's day for some is painful. I understand this but your experience does not change who God is to you. It simply begins redefining what true fatherhood and sonship is.
 - Today's message is not a 'how to message' on becoming a good father.
 - Today's message is more about who God is to us as Father and somehow in that we take on His heart and become better fathers by being better followers.
- Mt 6:6-9 Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "*Our Father in heaven.*"
- "It's no news that many folks watch the Super Bowl these days more for the advertisements than the game," says Paul Asay of Dads Matter. Companies will pay [as of 2015] \$4.5 million for every 30-second spot during the big game, so you know they're going to try to make them memorable. But the front-runner for my favorite ad this past year might be this dad-centric spot by Dove. After a 5 year-break, the Dove Men+Care ad campaign returned to the Super Bowl. The 2015 ad was designed to "celebrate the multidimensional aspects of masculinity that define what it means to be a man today," according to Jennifer Bremner, director of marketing at Dove Men+Care. The ad flashes from one scene to another, as children of all ages call out to their fathers to catch them as they jump into the pool; dance with them at their wedding; wrestle with them as they return home from work; soothe them when they're hurting. "Daddy!" "DaDa!" "Dad!" Asay continues: "What's in a name?" Shakespeare asked. In this ad, we see that the name "daddy" can be filled with a world of emotion. It's a squeal of joy. An exasperated groan. A salve for deep hurt. It's more than a name or a title. It's a conduit for connection—not just between a father and child, but to the many, many emotions that their relationship encompasses. **Application: Abba! A conduit for connection.** God our Father has a name which He longs to hear from our lips: "Abba!" It is the Hebrew term of endearment closest to our modern English word "Daddy!" but means even more. It is itself a conduit of connection to the very heart of God. With the loudest of cries, or the quiet of whispers, it immediately captures His attention and ushers us into His presence. Dads, we can be a living, breathing picture to our children of what it means to have a father—a Heavenly Father—who cares, who's there, who always responds. What's in a name? If the name is Abba, the answer is everything. "The Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15). What makes a dad stronger is showing that he cares. Sounds like my heavenly Father.

I. Abba! Father! A Conduit For Connection**A. The Hebrew word for father is Abba.**

1. It is made up of the first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.
2. **Aleph** - is the first letter of the Hebrew aleph-bet. It is a silent letter that usually has a vowel associated with it (this is what gives it sound). It is considered the "Father" of the alphabet, because it is the beginning/originator. Its original pictograph was an ox head. So its meaning came to be strength, leader. In the Ps 92:10 David says "You have anointed my head like that of a wild ox." David was speaking of strength and authority. David's words are a messianic reference to the Christ.
3. The second letter is **bet**...aleph-bet. Bet makes a picture like a shelter or house. So together the aleph bet or ABBA comes to mean the strength of the house; strength of God in the house. He is above this world and He intimately intimately involved in this world. In other words he closes the distance! between the two worlds.

B. Lets start by breaking the myth

1. The term Abba is not a childish term used to refer to our heavenly Father. It is a term used to refer to "Father". It is a term that establishes connection. It is a term used in identification. In the OT it is used over 1,100 times. And almost all of them are used as identifiers of relationship used by the Jewish people to determine connection. When you read your OT, almost every time you read the word 'father' you are reading the Heb. Abba. So it is not a childish term.

- a) Paul spoke this way, “*When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things.*” (1 Corinthians 13:11, NLT) When I was baby I referred to my father as ‘daddy.’ But, at some point my language changed to dad/father.
- b) When my language changed, my understanding of who this man is in my life also changed. The latter, dad, has a much more pronounced understanding of the relationship. I now know him much more than just the playful, provider and protector. I know him as father...giver/originator of my life (this gives me an anchor in life), and as the one who gives me identity because of my relationship to him.
- c) The greatest thing we can give to our children as dads is relationship and identity. Ie. “Just days after Caitlyn Jenner [formerly known as Olympic gold winning athlete Bruce Jenner] made her world debut, her kids were already facing a stumbling block in their relationship with her: Father’s Day!” reports RadarOnline. “With Father’s Day approaching, several of her kids had to ask Caitlyn if it is still appropriate to make plans to celebrate the day with her,” a Kardashian family insider tells Radar exclusively. “They were told that, ‘Yes, it is’ still appropriate,” says the source. “Caitlyn told the kids that she will always be their dad and that is never going to change.” Folks, that is confusing. And it creates confusion.
 - (1) God is all about clarity. It appears that it was Jesus who first applied the term ‘Father’ to God and who gave authority to his disciples do do so.
 - (2) When Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray He said, pray this way: “*Our Father...*” It wasn’t a childish term used to relate to God it was a clear message of identity and relationship. He wanted there to be no confusion about how to relate to God. He wanted them to clearly realize who they were to God.

C. The connection-Abba/Father

1. Dads, before you can begin to pray with confidence you must settle the question of whether God is your father and you are His child. Nothing is more important! Are you a child of God are you a part of His family? Just as you are born to a family in this earth you must be born again, Jesus taught. (Jn 1:12; 3:3.) That connection gives you identity and relationship.
2. Your heavenly Father inhabits eternity and is enthroned above the highest reach of the cosmos (Dt 26:15, 1 Kings 8:30) But even though He is exalted over all things He still knows the number of hairs on your head (Mt 10:30). Your Father’s greatness spans the cosmos and yet knows the smallest details of your life
3. As Dads, when we have that relationship with God clear/settled we will bring security and identity to our children in powerful ways. And we will also give them security in who they are. Having Father in the House brings identity and relationship-connection.

II. Abba The Heart of Our God - The Heart of a Father

- A. The Heart of God is to be our Father. Lets look a couple of scriptures. There are more but we will look at two.
 1. I want you to see today that this is God’s heart. He wants to be our Father.
 - a) “*I looked forward to your calling me ‘Father,’ and I wanted you never to turn from me.* Jer 3:19 Jeremiah is prophesying to the heart of the Father to Israel.
 - b) “*...Surely you are still our Father! Even if Abraham and Jacob would disown us, Lord, you would still be our Father. You are our Redeemer from ages past.*” (Isaiah 63:15–16, NLT) This is the heart of Israel to God.
 - c) Yes! He loves to hear us say as little children, “Daddy!”
 - d) And Yes! He loves to hear us call Him Father where we understand that we have identity and relationship with Him. This is God’s heart towards us!
 - e) God is looking for a generation of Fathers in this hour who live for relationship. Men who desire to be called “Father”. Men who are willing to go the distance even when their children turn from them. That is heart of God and it a powerful heart if found in us as dads.

- B. The heart of Abba is all about connection. God is all about relationship. Relationship is about intimacy. Not sexual in nature but in closeness. We were created in His image. He wanted children that He could commune with.
1. But a tragedy happened. A huge tragedy, His son, Adam, chose another father!
 - a) God's son lost his true identity and He was recreated in the image of his new father – the devil – John 8:40-44.
 - b) This sin of Adam and sin of all men after him was the distance created between God and man. This is the tragedy...DISTANCE! Distance between God/originator and His creation.
 2. God never planned for men to dream about heaven or hell as some nebulous eternal reward or punishment. He created man like Himself for companionship. For INTIMACY! Intimacy by its very nature cannot operate with distance. Intimacy always closes the distance between two individuals.
 - a) Intimacy is what clothed Adam and Eve in the Garden. God let them come close in their sin.
 - b) Intimacy is what sent Moses to Egypt. God came close to redeem them.
 - c) Intimacy is what sent Jesus to Bethlehem.
 - d) That is why He, Jesus, taught us to pray in Mt 6:9: "*Our Father in heaven...*" He wanted the atmosphere of the Father (heaven) to be our atmosphere. He wanted us to know our roots and our identity. Dad is available!
 - e) He was giving the disciples/us instruction on how to relate to God.
 - f) He wants them to know that God wants to relate to them. The Hebrew person, though aware of the word Abba, did not relate to God as Abba. Their very understanding of God kept him at a distance because of His holiness and out of respect for His position as God. Therefore, this prayer of Jesus is revolutionary as He is teaching His disciples to pray.
- C. The heart of Abba is about closing the distance. The father wants intimacy with His children. Luke 15:11-31. Story of the lost sons or the story of the Father's love. Two sons and one father make up this parable. Let me preface this: The integrity of my innocence set the quality of my intimacy.
1. The young son, asks for his inheritance leaves home. Puts distance between himself and his father. He squanders his inheritance/the father's wealth. Further putting distance between he and his father by embracing the values of his new father the devil.
 - a) He comes to his senses and starts home to be a servant in his father's house.
 - b) His father sees him at a distance and runs to him. This is the heart of the Father! To close the distance. The Father cannot close that distance until the sons heart turns towards home. But the Father is always looking for his son.
 2. The older son in the parable is working in the Father's field and hears the sound of celebration back at the house. He finds out his younger brother has come home and his father is throwing a party for the son 'who was dead but has come home!' He is angry!
 - a) The father, aware of the distance of the older son now goes to him and begs him to come in.
 - b) The father closed the distance. It is what fathers do.
 - c) Both sons are lost. Both sons were living with distance between themselves and the Father.
 3. Notice the wisdom of the Father. His approach to the two sons is filled with wisdom.
 - a) He runs to the younger son but walks out to the older.
 - b) He hugs and kisses the neck of the young son but begs the older son.
 - c) What would the story look like if you flipped the Father's response between the sons?
 - d) It is the beautiful heart of God to look for us and to move towards us in a language we understand.
 - (1) The younger son needed to know he was accepted back as a son.
 - (2) The older brother needed to know that at he had always had a father and everything the father had was his. Fathers live for connection and Fathers close the distance.

III. Abba, The Miracle of The Ages

- A. We can have new Father! God shows us what a real Father is. He shows us that the devil is no father but master of slaves. A wretched master that wants us isolated without any identity.
1. God sent His Son into the world so that we might know Him. It was Jesus who said, If you have seen me you have seen the Father! He revealed to us that the Father was willing (He healed the leper) He revealed to us that the Father was kind (woman at the well). He revealed to us that the Father was merciful (Jn 8 woman caught in adultery).
 2. **“But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”** (John 1:12-13, NLT) By faith we enter this relationship with Him.
- B. As children of God we have a new Father when we believe! God himself adopts the former slave and makes us a son!
1. **“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.””** (Romans 8:15, NLT) Abba, Father! This is not baby gibberish it is powerful word from our new understanding of who He is and who we are to Him. It is all about our relationship with Him.
 - a) I now have a personal connection with God! And not just a God but a Father to me!
 - b) I now have an identity... my roots are God my Father!
 2. **“And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.””** (Galatians 4:6, NLT) Identity and relationship.
 3. **“For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.”** (Romans 8:29, NLT)
- C. The miracle happens when the distance is closed! By faith we enter into relationship with Him. Why don't you take on His heart today!?

Conclusion:

- Ie. Joshua, Thanks for taking me fishing! He was hustling to close the distance.
- So much of our lives as children is lived trying to close the distance between us and our fathers. Then we become fathers and the distance between us and our children seems irrelevant and so we ignore it.
- As dads...like our heavenly Father, lets close the distance.
- The Prodigal son came to his senses and came home to a Father running to him. If you are that dad today, why don't you come home to the Father today.
- Some of you are living like the older brother. You are home but you are living with too much distance between and your Father. You are a part of the Father's house but you are far from the Father. You want to be closer but you are not.
 - As I said earlier, “The integrity of your innocence sets the quality of your intimacy.”
 - Like Peter (Lk 22:54), you follow at a distance when you could be by His side.

What makes a dad stronger is showing that he cares! Dads, God cares.
Dad be stronger show you care and close the distance.