

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

and the heart of Jesus

There are two huge claims that Christianity makes about God as a kind of father.

FIRST CLAIM

God creates a good problem for us.

He calls himself “Father” quite a lot. For those who have had an abusive father, this is a serious parent-trap. Much thinking has gone into this in recent decades. A study of scripture will reveal feminine attributes of God too. Yet, Jesus himself made “Dad” the ultimate prayer-statement in the “Our Father” prayer. “Abba” in Jesus language meant “Dad”. What it means in practise is best seen by looking into the moments where Jesus describes his Dad in the gospels. Read for instance Luke 15.11-32

Perhaps he picked that title in order to make the blokes raise their game! One of the single greatest issues affecting Australians today (was it always so?) is the father who is emotionally or physically absent. With the Abba title, God is hitting the mark for us all and we didn’t see it – “there is a Father in heaven who absolutely adores you, loves and likes you, and has time for you!”

What it has done for me, as a parent, is a sacred resolve never to allow any thing I do to be a stumbling block to my children’s growth (or my future grandchildren, nieces and so on) in love and trust! That’s the kind of everyday spirituality thing that God is very interested in.

THE SECOND CLAIM

There is more if you journey onwards.

Faith is mostly passed on through families. There are at least two consequences to this. As in good family arguments, you can really have it out with God, call him all sorts of things, get to the bottom of what is happening and sort it all out. He prefers this to a chilly silence of disconnection and apathy. Secondly, the church is a family, and “love one another” is meant to be personal. These two things can really open us outwards.

However, while this family/father thing is supposed to LEAD you to somewhere on your own spiritual journey, it is not supposed to LEAVE you there. In our adulthood, God can appear to be a very childish sort of figure, because we are hanging on to images from our past. A doting Santa, a cosmic insurance policy, an ageing old tyrant, etc.. Many people quite rightly refuse to believe in such a God, and I don't believe in it either.

Here is the big deal on this – to tune in to God in reality is to tune in to Jesus' relationship with God the Dad. There is nothing more true, more challenging nor more cherishing.

The question: **HOW do you want your relationship with God to be BETTER than your relationship is or was with your parent?**