

To Please My Father

Dear Friend,

Charismatic and evangelical Christians love to quote the words of Jesus in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Yet I believe that many of us have only apprehended the first half of that verse. A way only has meaning if it leads to a destination. Jesus is the **way**, but the Father is the **destination**.

The Revelation of the Father

In His high priestly prayer in John chapter 17, Jesus said to the Father, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world."¹ The Jewish people had known the name Jehovah (or Yahweh) for fourteen centuries. The name which Jesus now manifested to them occurred six times in His prayer. It was "**Father.**"

What does it mean that Jesus **manifested** that name to His disciples? As they watched Him living out His life before them as a Son of God, they could begin to understand what it means to have a personal relationship with God as Father. This was something that had never been openly revealed to the Jewish people under the old covenant.

Jesus emphasized that He alone can reveal the Father. "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."² John likewise said: "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him."³ For the revelation of the Father each of us is dependent on the grace that comes to us only through Jesus.

The writer of Hebrews makes a distinction between the message of the Old Testament prophets and that of Jesus: "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son. . . ."⁴

Literally, the Greek says not in **His** Son, but in **a** Son. God's message in the New Testament differed from His message in the Old Testament not only in content but also in the channel through which it came. In the Old Testament God spoke in **prophets**; in the New He spoke in a **Son**. Only Jesus as a Son could reveal God as Father.

A Personal Revelation

My understanding of God as Father was revolutionized by a personal experience early in 1996. Ruth and I had been sitting up in bed one morning, praying together as we normally do. Suddenly



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I became aware of a powerful force at work in my feet and lower legs. It moved upward, until my whole body was forcefully shaken by it. (Ruth told me later that the skin of my face changed to deep red.)

At the same time I was aware of an arm stretched out toward my head, seeking to press down on me something like a black skull cap. For a few moments there was a conflict between these two forces. Then the power at work in my body prevailed and the arm with the skull cap was forcibly dispelled—and vanished.

Immediately, without any mental process of reasoning, I knew that I could call God **my** Father. I had used the phrase “our Father” for more than fifty years. Doctrinally, I was clear about this truth. I had even preached a series of three messages on “Knowing God as Father.” But what I received at that moment was a direct, personal revelation.

Let me share with you my interpretation of this experience. I was born in India and spent the first five years of my life there. Twenty years later, after I was saved and baptized in the Holy Spirit, I became aware of some dark shadow from India that always hung over me. I understood that it was one of India’s “gods” (estimates range from 4 million to 300 million) that had followed me through life, seeking to possess me.

There was one particular way that this “god” oppressed me. Every morning I would awake with a dark foreboding of something evil awaiting me. It was never anything precise, just some amorphous darkness. This unknown evil never actually happened, but every day the foreboding was there.

After I was baptized in the Spirit, the foreboding diminished in intensity, but it never disappeared. I did, however, discover that if I set my mind to praise and worship the Lord, the foreboding would lift from me. Yet, it always came back next morning!

The day that black skull cap was pulled away, the foreboding vanished—never to return! And from that morning, it became completely natural for me to address God as “Father” or “my Father.” I have a personal relationship, not just a theological position!

I have now been enjoying this new relationship for about two years. It has given me new understanding of four scriptural truths concerning fatherhood.

1. Fatherhood is the source of our personal identity.

Throughout the Bible a person is always identified as the son—or daughter—of a certain man. This is expressed also in many English family names, such as Williamson, Jackson, Thompson. In each case, a person’s identity is derived from a father.

The breakdown of the family in many nations today has produced what has become known as “generation X.” X represents the **unknown quantity**. Many young people in this sad generation have no significant relationship with a father. Consequently they have an identity crisis. They do not really know who they are. The unspoken cry of their hearts is for a father.

I believe that if the Christian Church of today can effectively communicate the reality of God as a Father, multitudes of young people will run into their Father’s arms. We can do this in the same way that Jesus “manifested” the Father’s name to His disciples: by demonstrating in our daily lives

the reality of our own personal relationship with the Father.

2. Fatherhood assures us that we have a home in heaven.

Ever since I was saved, I have believed that if I continue faithful to the Lord, I will go to heaven when I die, but I have never really thought of heaven as my home. After that arm with the black skull cap was taken away, however, it has become natural to view heaven as my home. Shortly afterwards I said to Ruth, "When I die, if you want to give me a tombstone, you can just write on it two words: **"Gone Home."**

I began to think about the poor beggar who lay outside the rich man's door. When he died, he "was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom."⁵ Surely one angel would have been sufficient to carry that emaciated form, but God sent an escort of angels! The beggar was given a royal welcome into Abraham's bosom. I believe that it should be like that for every child of God. He has an escort of angels ready to carry each of us to our eternal home.

At one time Ruth and I came to know a precious Hawaiian sister (we will call her Mary) who served the Lord faithfully for many years. She used to say to her friends, "I've never seen an angel. I would love to see one!"

As Mary lay dying of cancer, her church saw to it that there was always a Christian sister by her bed. One day Mary's face became radiant with the glory of God. She stretched out her arms and said, "I see them – I see the angels!" Then she was gone! Her angelic escort had carried her home.

John Wesley once received word that a Methodist sister he knew had died. He responded, "Did she go in glory—or only in peace?" I believe every child of God should go home in glory—with an escort of angels.

3. Fatherhood provides total security.

Picture a little child held securely by his father's arm, with his face pressed against the father's shoulder. There may be great confusion and distress all around. The world may seem to be falling apart. But the little child is totally at peace, unconcerned by what is taking place all around him. He is secure in his father's arms.

We, too, are securely held by our Father. Jesus has assured us that our Father is greater than all that may surround us and no one is able to snatch us out of His hand.⁶

To His disciples Jesus also gave this assurance: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."⁷ We may be just a little flock, surrounded by wild beasts of all kinds. But if our Father has committed Himself to give us the kingdom, there is no power in the universe that can withhold it from us.

4. Fatherhood provides motivation for service.

In Philippians 2:3 Paul warns us as servants of the Lord: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit. . . ." Over the years I have observed that one persistent, pervasive problem in the Church is personal ambition and competition with other ministers. Let me add that I observed this first and foremost in my own life.

We often make the mistake of equating **security** with **success**. If I build the biggest church, or hold the largest meeting, or get the most names on my mailing list, I will be secure. But this is a delusion. In actual fact, the more we aim at personal success, the less secure we become. We are continually threatened by the possibility that someone else may build a bigger church, or hold a larger meeting, or get more names on his mailing list.

As for myself, I have found my perfect pattern in Jesus, who said, “The Father has not left Me alone, **for I always do those things that please Him.**”⁸ I am no longer motivated by personal ambition. I have discovered a sweeter, purer motive: **simply to please my Father.**

I am training myself to approach every situation or every decision with a single, simple question: How can I please my Father? In times of frustration or seeming failure, I seek to turn my focus from trying to solve the problem to maintaining an attitude that is pleasing to my Father. As servants of Christ, there is no competition among us if we are motivated by this simple desire to please our Father. Harmony and mutual concern take the place of striving and self-seeking.

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As you have been reading this letter, you may have recognized that you, too, are longing for a closer, more intimate relationship with God as your Father. But perhaps there is a satanic barrier—like the black skull cap in my case—that has come between you and the Father.

Remember that Jesus is the only One who can reveal the Father to you. Ask Him to remove any barrier there may be in your life and then to grant you a direct personal revelation of the Father. After that, just trust Him and wait for Him to grant you the revelation that you need in His own way and time.

Yours in the Master’s service,



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¹John 17:6

²Matthew 11:27

³John 1:18

⁴Hebrews 1:1–2 (NAS)

⁵Luke 16:22

⁶John 10:29

⁷Luke 12:32

⁸John 8:29