

Father / A Proper Reference Point

As we learn of God, study the Scriptures, mature in our faith, and discover his ways, we will ideally begin to grasp his primary role to us as our Heavenly Father. The word father is used 354 times in the New Testament and nearly 1,000 times in the entire Bible. Before the foundation of the world, God was Father — a Father who desired children. How many children are born in our world every day that will grow up without a father? And God, knowing the limits of earthly fathers, was committed from the foundations of the world to provide the ultimate plan for his fatherhood.

Galatians 4:4-5 In the fullness of time God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul noted in Romans 8:16, **The Spirit bears witness with our spirit....that we are the children of God.**

And God set in motion the purpose behind a plan for his family.

It is often made to seem that man appeared on the stage of time just so he could be saved. Thus it seems man became important in God's purpose only in his fall. Therefore, God's chief work is normally seen as redemptive. Should that be so? The Apostle Paul always started with God's vital Fatherhood. It was not with the Father's varied activities, nor with his wondrous attributes that Paul started; it was with the person, who he chiefly is: The Father. Thus God's vital Fatherhood is seen to be the controlling and ultimate factor that determines his activities.¹

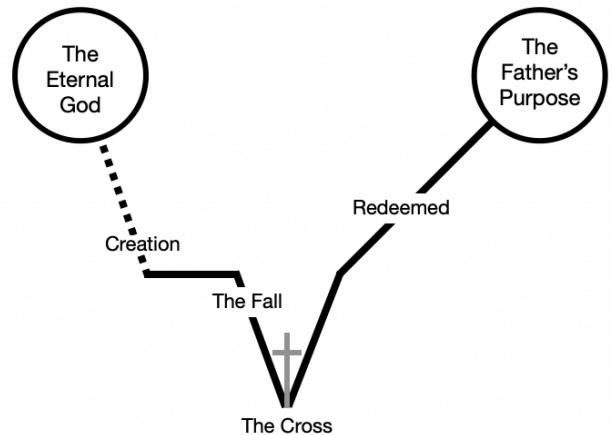
As a counselor I have always been taken aback by how many of my male clients had an egregious view and memory of their earthly father. As I recall those sessions I am always reminded of Paul's challenge to us in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 12:2 Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.

What does it mean to renew our minds — to reform how we think?

Do not be conformed to this world refers literally to the schemes of this world, the schemes men come up with to regulate and run their lives. The spirit of the age is always the same....the advancement of self.²

The word 'renew' is used only by Paul. It means to 'grow up new, afresh' like foliage in the spring....so that the whole mind and disposition and tastes of the man will become conformed to the fact that he is a new creature....that the object of this renewing includes the mind....the imagination....the preferencesall must come under the Spirit's control.³



It actually takes an entirely new way of thinking for us to see God as the Father that he is. Our belief system must change its very premise regarding fatherhood. Even if we had a wonderful, loving earthly father, we must renew our minds and “rethink” our understanding of God — our eternal Father. A change in our very identity took place when we became true believers. We are to conform our thinking to that new identity and the paternal plans our Father has designed for us.

Romans 8:15 For the Spirit which you have now received is not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit producing sonship in the bliss of which we cry, Abba Father! Father!

Another translation puts it this way.....

You did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,” leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the “Spirit of full acceptance,” enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, “Beloved Father!”

The Renewing of our mind is about:

- learning to live like....who we are
- learning the ways....of our Father
- learning to understand....his view

At Rapha we built an entire therapy program for both adults and adolescents around the four lies that many Christians believe when it comes to identity and value as a person. Those lies are:

Lie #1 — I must meet certain standards to feel good about myself

Lie #2 — I must be approved & accepted by certain others to feel good about myself

Lie #3 — Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be shunned

Lie #4 — I am who I am. I cannot change. I am sadly hopeless

As we secure the process of renewing our mind, we will discover that:

- we are loved and cared for beyond measure....just as we are
- we have an eternal value that the world cannot provide or understand
- we are complete in Christ and able to meet all the demands and pressures of life

Romans 8:18-19whatever we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal to us later. For all creation is waiting eagerly for that future day when God will reveal who his children really are.

Part of renewing our mind is to learn how to peel back the false belief systems and learn to trust in the truth of who we are in our gracious heavenly Father’s eyes.

We do not know how much we owe to suffering. Many of the richest blessings that have come down to us from the past are the fruit of sorrow and pain. ⁴

Part of the reason life is filled with pain and demands is because we are in the university of suffering to learn how to love and be loved — and often failure is the only avenue to finding that.

Oswald Chambers once stated....“Our cross is the pain involved in doing the will of God.”

It is only when I surrender myself to God....when I put myself under His authority, when I am filled with His love....[that] I possess the true self-esteem and self-love that enables me to love other people....and self is released from trying to be someone it

isn't and was never intended to be. As a result you and I can become what we were meant to be.⁵

God is either building us up through the pressures of external circumstances on the outside and the Holy Spirit's teaching on the inside — or our father is showing us his paternal kindness and care by tearing down our self-dependence by teaching us to lean on him.

The "renewing of the mind" is a process which, by faith, we change our view of both God our paternal Father, and our tainted view of ourselves.

And what is the ultimate, future, glorious plan God has for his children?

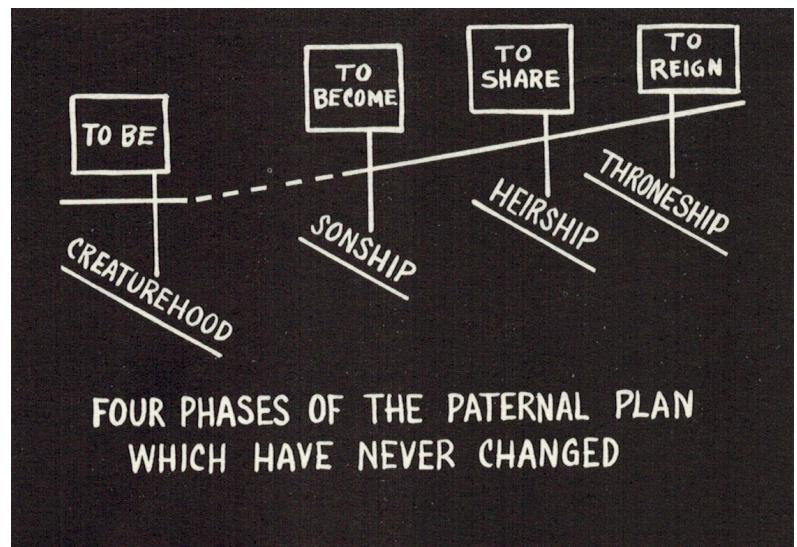
Galatians 4:6-7 **So that we would know that we are his true children, God released the Spirit of Sonship into our hearts....and because we're his, we can access everything our Father has—for we are heirs because of what he has done!**

Your Father is saying to you....

"You are my precious child, sealed with a divine kiss and brought into the kingdom of light. Like any good parent, I look at you and see perfection. I see the reflection of myself in you. I see the tender musings of your heart as you lean in to my strong arms. I am here for you, and I will never leave."

Maturity as God's children is learning the Father's ways as he prepares us through his ultimate plan. Maturity is learning the tension between creature hood and sonship which, for the believer, began at the cross.

Your Father longs to be a part of your day — each and every day, 24/7. He's your Heavenly Father — full of mercy and loving-kindness!



1 DeVern Fromke

2 Ray Stedman

3 William Newell

4 Paul Billheimer quoting Dr. J. R. Miller

5 David Seamands