

Nature and Character of God

What Is God Like?

September 08, 2019

- I. The nature and character of God as seen in His being our Father
 - A. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns us not to be religious show-offs who make public displays of our giving and praying, or who proudly proclaim how much we give and how often we pray.
 - 1. In other words, we are to avoid giving in any way that seeks to impress or gain recognition from those around us.
 - a. Sadly, some churches and Christian organizations have ignored this teaching and used people's desire for positive recognition to encourage giving. And an example of this is displaying the names of those who give, and even the level of their giving, on such things as plaques for the wall or bricks for the floor.
 - b. But giving is not the only thing Christians are tempted to use to show off their generosity and spirituality, public prayer is another means of gaining recognition and approval.
 - c. And here again, Jesus teaches us what not to do and what to do in order to keep prayer between God and you, instead of using it to impress the people around you.
 - 2. And so we read these words from Jesus in **Matthew 6:9**, "Pray, then, in this way: '**Our Father** who is in heaven . . .'" Of the several ways Jesus could have taught us to begin our prayers, He taught us to start with: "**Our Father** – who is in heaven."
 - 3. For me, this is significant, because God is not only the supreme being who created the world and is our Lord and Master, He is also our father who is as loving and tender and nurturing as a mother.
 - 4. And this brings us to our study today in which we will look at the nature and character of God as seen in His being our Father.
 - B. Pray
- II. The various facets or sides of God our Father
 - A. In considering the nature and character of God as our Father, I want to begin by reminding you that we can learn about God's fatherhood by examining what a good human father is like.
 - 1. Now I acknowledge that not every child has the kind of father who provides a model for seeing the Father in God. Yet those of us who are adults can think about and envision what a good father would

or at least should look like, and in so doing, gain a better understanding of what God is like as our Father.

2. Jesus affirms this approach to better understanding the fatherhood of God in **Luke 11:11-13**, where He says, “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; [you] will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will [you]? [12] Or if [you] are asked for an egg, [you] will not give him a scorpion, will [you]? [13] If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give [good gifts such as] the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”
 - a. Jesus anchors the truth He is proclaiming on the premise that we are able to discern the difference between a good father and a bad father, a loving father and a selfish father, a kind father and a mean or cruel father, a gentle father and a harsh father, and an involved father and a distant or uninvolved father.
 - b. Therefore, because we can discern these things on the human level, Jesus says we can figure out that our Heavenly Father is a good Father – and especially since the scriptures tell us that
 - (1) He is light and in Him there is no darkness at all,
 - (2) and that He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, and who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin,
 - (3) and that He is the One who shows us the path of life, and in His presence is fullness of joy, and in His right hand are pleasures for ever,
 - (4) and that He is our **strength**, our **rock**, our **fortress**, our **deliverer**, our **God**, our **hiding place**, in whom we take refuge; our **shield** and the **horn** of our salvation, and our **stronghold**.
3. Matthew took this same truth and stated it this way in **Matthew 7:11**, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”
4. In other words, because God is our Father and because we have the ability to discern a good father from a bad father, we can look at God through the truth of His Word and see that He is a perfectly good father.
 - a. But of course, you must choose to believe that God is good in spite of what people say about God or the devil tempts you to

believe about Him in order to use the imagery of a good earthly father to better understand just how good of a father God is.

- b. And so with these things in mind, let's move on to some of the various facets or sides of God's fatherhood.

B. God's nature and character is to be a reconciling, adoptive Father

1. Adam and Eve started out in a right relationship to God, a relationship of intimacy and companionship, but because of their sin, that relationship was damaged, and in its fullest sense, it was lost.
2. And like them, due to our sin, we are separated from God and our relationship with God remains in a damaged condition until we repent, come to faith in Jesus Christ, and proceed to live a godly life. But notice, it is God, our loving Father, who acts first in seeking to repair the damage and reconcile us to Himself.
 - a. It is for this reason that the scripture says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, and not counting their trespasses against them" (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). For me, this is proof of the reconciling nature of God.
 - b. You see, God wants relationship with us, individually and corporately, and He has taken the first steps in bringing us to the place where we can work out our differences with Him, confess our sins against Him, seek His forgiveness, and repair the relationship, and in so doing, be reconciled to Him so that we can go forward in an intimate relationship with Him.
3. While on earth, Jesus made it clear how important reconciliation is to God, and He did this in two specific teachings.
 - a. **First**, Jesus said, "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (**Matthew 5:23-24**).
 - (1) In other words, don't pretend to be worshiping the God of reconciliation when you, yourself, are not doing your part to repair, heal, and reconcile a relationship that you know is damaged or broken.
 - b. **Second**, Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (**Matthew 5:9**).
 - (1) A peacemaker is someone who helps others bring healing and restoration to damaged or broken relationships.

4. However, it is not only in God's nature and character to reconcile us to Himself, He adopts us into His family and makes us His own.
 - a. Paul makes this point in several places, but I will read just one.
 - b. **Romans 8:14-17**. "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. [15] For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' [16] The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."
5. And so once again I want to affirm that as our Father, it is God's nature and character to be a reconciling, adoptive God.

C. God's nature and character is to be a compassionate Father

1. I know we looked at **Psalms 103:8-14** a few Sundays back, but for me it presents one of the best pictures of God as a compassionate Father.
 - a. Now before reading this Psalm, I want to remind you that when we say God is **compassionate**, what we mean is that His disposition or His normal inclination is that of pity or sympathy toward those who are suffering in some way – even if their suffering is due to their own foolish or sinful choices and behavior.
 - b. **Psalms 103:8-14**, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness. [9] He will not always strive with us, nor will He keep His anger forever. [10] He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. [11] for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. [12] As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. [13] Just as a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him. [14] For He Himself knows our frame; He is mindful that we are but dust."
2. A NT example of God as our compassionate Father comes from Jesus. He told a parable about a man who had two sons. One of them asked for his inheritance, got it, left home, went broke, and was in such dire need that he was feeding pigs and eating their food to stay alive. Upon coming to his senses, he headed home in hopes

his father would at least take him in as a hired hand. And so we read in **Luke 15:20-24**, “But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him **and felt compassion for him**, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. [21] And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' [22] **But the father said** to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; [23] and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; [24] for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.”

3. It is my hope that you can see from **Psalms 103** and **Luke 15** that it is God’s nature and character to be a compassionate father toward all of who will humbly and repentantly come to Him.

D. As a Father, it is God’s nature and character to discipline His children, or as the writer of Hebrews says, to disciplines those He loves.

1. We read in **Proverbs 3:11-12**, “My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof, [12] for whom the LORD loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.”
 - a. It is this proverb that the writer of Hebrews quotes in his exhortation to see our Father’s discipline as an act of love intended to teach us the best way of life.
 - b. **Hebrews 12:5-6**, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the LORD, nor faint when you are reproved by Him; [6] for those whom the LORD loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.”
2. Following **vs 6**, the writer of Hebrews says something we are wise to consider. He says in **vs 7**, “It is for discipline that you endure.”
 - a. So why would we want to endure our Father’s discipline. Let me give you two reasons.
 - b. **First**, we should want to endure our Father’s discipline because His motive is love. In other words, His discipline comes solely and always from the motive of love.
 - c. The **second reason** we should want to endure His discipline is because it is always and only for our benefit and for the benefit of those we are hurting or harming by our sin.
3. In other words, it is our Father’s nature and character to love us enough to discipline us for our good, and for the good of those effected by our choices and behavior.

4. But how can we know the our Father is disciplining us? You might start by looking at the various ways and means God used to discipline Israel, or the kings of Israel. Then you could read over the blessings and the curses from **Deuteronomy 28** to see the kind of things God uses to discipline His people. And you could consider Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 11:30**.
 - a. With those things in mind, you can look at your life to see if you are facing or dealing with something that is similar to the passages of scripture I just mentioned.
 - b. If so, it is probable God is using that thing or those situations to get your attention, bring you to your senses, realign your path, and lead you further down the narrow path.
- E. As a Father, it is God's nature and character to provide for us and give us good gifts.
 1. James confirms this in very clear terms when he writes, "Every **good thing given** and every **perfect gift** is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow" (**James 1:17**).
 2. Jesus spoke of God being the giver of good gifts on several occasions. For example, we read in **Matthew 5:45**, that God "causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous."
 3. And in **Matthew 6:26, 28-33**, Jesus said, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? [28] And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, [29] yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. [30] But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! [31] Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' [32] For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. [33] But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."
 4. Beyond the provisions mentioned already, it is in our Father's nature and character to bless – above and beyond His more common provisions – those who share what they have with people in need.

- a. Jesus makes this point in **Luke 6:38**, “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”
 - b. And in **2 Corinthians 9:6-7**, Paul adds these words of wisdom about giving, “Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. [7] Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
- F. It is our Father’s nature and character to not only provides, but also to protects – especially those who are vulnerable.
 - 1. I think the best picture of God acting in this way comes from **Psalms 68:5-6**, which says that God is “a father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows.... [6] God makes a home for the lonely; He leads out the prisoners into prosperity, only the rebellious dwell in a parched land.”
 - 2. And back in **Deuteronomy 10:18**, we read, “[God] executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing.”
 - 3. It may be hard to see God, our Father doing this when it comes to specific situations or times in history, but this is why we are wise to trust the One who judges righteously rather than trusting our own limited perception of what God is or isn’t doing.

III. Conclusion

- A. Finally, it is God’s nature and character to be a tender Father.
 - 1. This is stated in a number of place in the Bible, but two places stand out to me.
 - 2. **Isaiah 40:11**, “Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes.
 - 3. **Isaiah 49:15-16a**, “Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. [16] Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands....”
- B. This is the nature and character of God, our Father.