

Steve Fouch looks at our relationship with our Heavenly Father

OUR HEAVENLY DAD

'Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir' Galatians 4:6-7

At a recent CMF conference, a young boy of no more than 18-months was discovering the freedom of walking and exploring a new place, when he ran up to me. I started to chat to him, but within seconds he heard his dad calling him, and ran off, climbing into his father's arms before looking at me and proceeding to point and exclaim at all the new things around him. Confident in his father's arms, he was happy to talk to me.

Abba is the Aramaic informal name for father, based on that most primitive exclamation of small children that we all know; *dada*, *baba*, *abba*. Jesus calls his heavenly Father *Abba* in Gethsemane as he prays for the cup to pass him by.¹ Paul twice urges Christians to remember that through Jesus's death and resurrection they are adopted into God's family as heirs (ie. like a first born son in a first century Jewish household) and so to call God *Abba*.²

That is both the intimacy and the amazing privilege that God pours out on us.

Like that father with his son, God holds us, protects and shields us, so that we can have confidence. He disciplines, comforts, guides and protects. He holds our hands when we are unsure, but lets us roam and discover, and when we get lost, he comes and finds us. He is our 'heavenly Dad'. There are times for formality, to approach his heavenly throne with awe and respect, penitence and worship, but there are also times when we are welcomed to just run into his presence like a child with their daddy.

Not everyone has had that kind of relationship with their human father, so it is not always easy to approach God in this way. It can be a painful process to let go of the damaged view of fatherhood our own dads may have given us. But ultimately that is what he wants for us all: To know him as our 'Dad in heaven'.

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references

1. Mark 14:36
2. Romans 8:15-17