



**There is
one God
and Father
of us all.**

**God fathered our first birth
through creation.**

**And He fathers our second birth
through the transforming power
of His Holy Spirit.**

B A R R Y A D A M S

Author of Father's Love Letter

There is one **God** and **Father** of us all.

By Barry Adams

Ephesians 4:4-6

4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. NLT



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There is one God and Father of us all

by Barry Adams

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Preface

Over 26 years ago, I came into a deeper revelation of the Fatherheart of God that completely changed my life. This new understanding that Almighty God was my true Father came after I had been a Christian for 22 years.

Even though I had a solid theological understanding of the First Person of the Trinity, I didn't have a heart revelation that He was truly my Abba. It was only when the Holy Spirit bore witness with my spirit that this became an experiential reality, and I could see my heavenly Father through a new lens—that He was really my Dad!

Overwhelmed with all of the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation that now I could plainly see that spoke of God's Fatherheart for the

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world, I created a sermon illustration called 'Father's Love Letter' in January 1999.

This simple compilation of 50 paraphrased Bible passages went viral on the Internet, and today, it is available in over 125 language translations. Over the years, thousands of people worldwide have shared how the revelation of the Father's love has changed their lives.

My wife and I have felt that we have had front-row seats all these years to witness how the unconditional love of God has the potential to transform a person's heart.

In John 14:8, Jesus' disciple Philip said... *'Show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.'* I believe this is the cry of every human heart. I am so thankful that Jesus responded to this

heart's cry in verse 9 by saying... *If you've seen me, you've seen my Father.*

When we have eyes to see it, we will begin to realize that the very core of the gospel message is the Father's great love for the world. As my friend James Jordan has said... *"The Bible is the story of a Father who lost His children in a garden and a Son who came to get us back."*

That is the heart of John 3:16-17 where Jesus says... 16 *"For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. 17 God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world but to save the world through him. NLT*

I am writing this book simply to declare God's Fatherheart for every person on our planet, for

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we all originated in His heart before He created the world. I realize that some might see this declaration of God's Fatherhood as controversial for fear that it might negate the need for every person to come to a point of faith in Christ. But that need not to be the case.

For it is essential that we all experience a personal revelation of Jesus Christ that causes us to be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit for us to come into the fullness of God's eternal plan for our lives.

Though God fathered our first birth through partnering with our biological parents, the whole purpose of our lives here on Earth is that God wants to also father our second birth through a simple act of childlike faith when we believe and receive the beautiful gift of His beloved Son.

I hope you will see God through a new lens as you read this book. He is not distant and angry, as perhaps your earthly father misrepresented Him to be, but He is the Perfect Father, perfectly displayed through the life, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

The life-changing truth is that God has always had a father's heart for us and longs for us to come home. What is at issue is whether we will respond to His invitation of love this side of heaven. God loves us either way, but when we realize He has an eternal plan for each of us that finds its completion in Christ, life takes on a whole new meaning.

We will no longer feel unloved and disconnected from our eternal destiny, for we will know that living as a much-loved child of God is what we were created to experience.

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And when this new creation reality becomes real to us by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, we will declare with the Apostle Paul the words he wrote in Ephesians 4:4-6...

4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. NLT

Chapter 1

God's Fatherheart For The World

Ephesians 3:14-15

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. NIV

The overarching theme of the Bible is God's amazing love for the world and His Fatherheart for the human race. For God created humanity in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28) so we would all be an extension of His family on planet Earth (Luke 3:38).

When Adam and Eve fell, their hearts turned away from God (Genesis 3), but God's heart towards them never changed (Malachi 3:6). Though creating is what God does (Genesis 1:1), a loving Father is who He is at the core of

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His being (1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 John 4:16, 1 John 3:1).

We see golden threads of God's fathering throughout the Old Testament in how He expressed His heart for Israel (Isaiah 64:8, Isaiah 63:16, Deuteronomy 1:31, Deuteronomy 32:6, Jeremiah 3:19-20). King David wrote about God's intimate involvement in our creation process in Psalm 139 and referred to God's Fatherheart in Psalm 68:5 and Psalm 103:13-14. These are just a few of the many biblical references in the Old Testament that refer to God's loving care for all of humanity.

And then we come to the New Testament, where Jesus introduces God by one name and one name only... And that is the name, *Father*. Not only did Jesus refer to God as His Father (John 5:18), but He taught His disciples to pray using the words... '*Our Father in*

heaven' (Matthew 6:9-13). He told them to pray in secret to their Father because their Father knows what they need before they even ask for it (Matthew 6:6-8).

Jesus also reminded them that if their heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air, how much more will He look after them? (Matthew 6:25-32) And He encouraged them to ask their Father for good gifts because God's goodness far exceeded that of their biological fathers (Matthew 7:7-11). Jesus also told His disciples not to call anyone on earth 'father' because they had one Father in heaven (Matthew 23:9).

If we realize that all these New Testament references to God being a Father were still in the Old Covenant (because Jesus had not yet died and risen again), this shows God's fatherheart for us even then. While this is

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biblically clear, somehow, the idea of God fathering the human race seems to be controversial in some Christian circles.

But my question is simply this... If our creation didn't originate in the heart of God, where did we come from? 1 Corinthians 8:6 clearly states that everything created originated in the Father and the Son...

But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live. NLT

So, what is so controversial about declaring God's Fatherhood of the human race? I think some well-meaning believers are concerned that this idea leads to a theology that says, 'If God fathered the human race, there is no

need for a spiritual renewal of the human heart because we are already His children.' But even though Jesus referred to God as being 'your Father' many times in the gospels, He still said that we all need a second birth.

In John 3, Jesus is conversing with one of Israel's spiritual leaders (Nicodemus), and He tells this Pharisee of the need for a person to be 'born again' to see the Kingdom of God. (John 3:3) Nicodemus immediately tries to understand this through a grid of a second physical birth when Jesus replies in John 3:5-6...

5 *“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. NIV*

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The NLT describes verse 6 as follows:
Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life.

In essence, Jesus was saying every person on the planet needs to be born twice: once in the natural (born by water) and once in the spiritual (born of the Spirit). If we understand that the genesis of both our births comes from our heavenly Father, then there is no theological conflict in declaring... There is one God and Father of us all!

When we see that both our natural birth and spiritual birth are essential for us to see the fulfillment of God's dream for His family (Ephesians 1:3-6), we will declare God's Fatherhood and His great love for the entire human race! For God fathered our natural birth when He knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13-14), and God fathers our

spiritual birth through the finished work of Christ (Titus 3:4-7) when we dare to simply believe it to be true (Ephesians 2:8-9).

In this divine transformation, we are born again of God's own seed (1 John 3:9, 1 Peter 1:3-4, 1 Peter 1:23), and His Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are indeed His children and His much-loved heirs.

Romans 8:15-17

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. NIV

Chapter 2

God Has Always Been Father

Matthew 6:9-13

9 “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. NIV

The Old Testament contains over 300 descriptions of God's character and nature. Some of the names we are most familiar with are Yahweh, Jehovah, Elohim, and El Shaddai. But many other names of God were used to describe His majesty, holiness, and power.

However, when Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago, He used only one name to describe God's character and nature... that name was '*Father*.' In a religious environment where the Pharisees could not even say the name '*Yahweh*' out loud, Jesus taught everyday people to address God as their Father in heaven.

Can you imagine how scandalous this would have been in the religious community of the day? No wonder the Pharisees were enraged with Jesus and wanted to kill Him (John 5:18).

He singlehandedly demolished all of the false structures they had erected when they attempted to reveal God as unapproachable through their twisted theology of the God of the Old Covenant.

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Yet if we have eyes to see it, we can see threads of God's fathering love for Israel throughout the Old Testament.

In Exodus 4:22, God instructs Moses to tell Pharoah that Israel is His firstborn son. Here are a few other passages that speak of God's fathering relationship with Israel...

Deuteronomy 1:31

and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” NIV

Deuteronomy 32:6

Is this the way you repay the Lord, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator who made you and formed you? NIV

Isaiah 64:8

Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. NIV

Jeremiah 3:19-20

19 “I myself said, “How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.’ I thought you would call me ‘Father’ and not turn away from following me. 20 But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me,” declares the Lord. NIV

Though Israel decided to reject God's fathering heart, God's steadfast love had always remained the same for them and for the entire human race. That is why Jesus came to the lost sheep of Israel and reclaimed the one and only name that completely

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encapsulated everything that God was, is, and will forever be—and that name is Father.

When we begin to see God for who He is as Father, we will see ourselves differently in light of His love. This will also change how we view the big-picture story in the Bible. We will no longer envision God as an angry judge or distracted deity, but we will see Him as He is... A loving Father, brokenhearted over His wayward children, who sent His only Son to completely redeem and restore us.

It is that simple yet that eternally profound. Jesus' death on the cross and His glorious resurrection allowed us to experience a new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3) so we could truly know at a heart level that His Father was our Father (John 20:17).

The truth is that God has always been and will always be Father throughout eternity. That is who He is. Our response to His fathering love will not change His nature one way or the other.

The only issue is whether we will open our hearts to receive the infilling of His love that is experientially ours through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). This is the eternal inheritance of everyone who simply dares to believe it to be true and has put their trust in Christ to save them.

I hope and pray that we will all realize this is God's desire for every person on the planet (2 Peter 3:9) so that we will all cry out... *Abba Father! You really are my Father!* (Romans 8:15-17)

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John 1:11-13

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV

Chapter 3

The Triune Heart Of God

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” NIV

There is one God revealed in three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Though wholly united in the bond of love, the Father isn’t the Son, nor is the Son the Father. Yet Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and the exact representation of His being (Hebrews 1:3).

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There are many times in the gospels where Jesus speaks of His union with His Father. He said... *I and the Father are one.* (John 10:30) *If you have seen Me, you have seen My Father.* (John 14:9-11) *The Son can do nothing of Himself; He can only do what He sees His Father doing.* (John 5:19-20) These verses are a few of the Scriptures that reveal an inseparable union beyond our limited human understanding.

Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of *your* Father (Matthew 10:18-20), and the Apostle Paul refers to the Third Person in the Trinity as the Spirit of the Son (Galatians 4:6-7). So, in the very core of the Spirit's being resides the heart of both Father and Son.

It was in this bond of eternal affection that the Triune God decided to create humanity in their image (Genesis 1:26). The Father is the source

of all things (1 Corinthians 8:6), and the Son is the agent of all creation (Colossians 1:15-16; John 1:1-3). All the while, the Spirit brooded over creation as a mother hen cares for her chicks (Genesis 1:2).

I love how King Solomon describes the creation process in Proverbs 8:28-31...

28 I was there when he set the clouds above, when he established springs deep in the earth.

29 I was there when he set the limits of the seas, so they would not spread beyond their boundaries. And when he marked off the earth's foundations, 30 I was the architect at his side. I was his constant delight, rejoicing always in his presence. 31 And how happy I was with the world he created; how I rejoiced with the human family! NLT

It was in this community of love that the genesis of humanity was birthed (Genesis

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1:27), and Adam became a son of God. While Adam and Eve ceased to walk in the heart of sonship to God because of their choice to eat from the wrong tree (Genesis 3:1-7), God never ceased being their Father.

Throughout the Old Testament, we read many accounts of God pursuing humanity. Yet, for the most part, humanity made the same choice over and over again that their great, great, great... grandparents, Adam and Eve, made, and that was independence from God and reliance on their own abilities.

However, in the fullness of time, after sending many messengers, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to be the visible Word of God to a fatherless world (Hebrews 1:1-2). Affirmed by the Father and filled with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:13-17), Jesus,

being the perfect Son, made a way for all humanity to come home (John 14:6).

Even on the cross, when Jesus took upon Himself the weight of the world's sin, the Father was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-20), making a way for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:14-21).

Thus, we see the fulfillment of the heart of Triune Love. The Father draws everyone to Jesus (John 6:44-45), and Jesus reveals the Father in turn (Matthew 11:27).

The Holy Spirit, who indwells the heart of every believer (1 Corinthians 6:19), is the vessel of God's love (Romans 5:5), and the One who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-17).

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I like to think of the Trinity this way: God the Father is the source of all love (1 John 4:16). God the Son is love personified (John 14:9). And God the Holy Spirit is love imparted (Romans 5:5).

I especially like a description of the Godhead that I heard many years ago. It beautifully yet simply describes how Father, Son, and Spirit interact and work in sync together in their pursuit of every heart...

The right arm of God is Jesus, and the left arm of God is the Holy Spirit, and both arms are drawing humanity into the Father's bosom.

Here are a few Scriptures that beautifully describe Triune Love in action...

Matthew 3:16-17

16 After his baptism, as Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my dearly loved Son, who brings me great joy." NLT

Ephesians 2:18

Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. NLT

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. NLT

Chapter 4

Two Trees In The Garden

Genesis 2:8-9

8 Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. 9 The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

NIV

If we are to understand why God hides the Kingdom from the wise and learned and reveals it to little babies (Matthew 11:25-26), we need to go back to the Garden of Eden. Before the fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed unbroken fellowship with the Godhead without ever needing to know right from wrong.

They walked with God in the cool of the day while being naked and unashamed. They were oblivious to any form of self-judgment and lived in the beautiful simplicity of being loved and cared for by a loving Father. Since they were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), all creation recognized them as image bearers of the Almighty. After all, Adam was God's beloved son (Luke 3:38) and was entrusted with the authority to have dominion over all creation. (Genesis 1:28)

It was only when the serpent tempted the woman with a lie that they fell from God's original intent for their lives. Interestingly, the serpent's temptation to deceive was that Adam and Eve could be 'like God,' knowing good from evil. (Genesis 3:5) The crazy thing about humanity's first couple was that they were like God already because they were His kids! All creation recognized their royal status

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as God's beloved children, but somehow they missed the obvious.

Often, when we think of this tree, we think of it being only the knowledge of evil, but think again. Genesis 3:6 says... *When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it.* NIV

I think our desire to 'gain wisdom' is still the most foundational temptation we face today. Religion imposes a yoke on us we were never created to bear. It shackles us with the weight of having to figure out good from evil in the hope that our self-effort will make us more God-like.

If I were to summarize what the two trees represent in single-word descriptors, I would use words like dependency vs. independence,

union vs. separation, and childlike vs. grownup. I believe there is a less-traveled path where we can experience a greater awakening to the Kingdom that Jesus said our Father is delighted to give us (Luke 12:32).

Jesus said it is found only when we transform from being competent, self-sufficient, and independent (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) to being childlike, simplistic, and absolutely dependent on God for everything (the tree of life). I believe the second option is available for all of us if we are willing to turn in the opposite direction and embrace the beautiful humility of a little child.

Matthew 18:1-5

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" 2 He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them.

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3 And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. 4 Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. 5 And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. NIV

Chapter 5

The Kidnapping Of God's Kids

2 Timothy 2:24-26

24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. NIV

The tragedy of Genesis 3 tells the story of a diabolical plan from the enemy of our souls to deceive humanity's first couple into believing a lie. Revealing himself in the form of a serpent, the devil tricked Adam and Eve into questioning God's goodness and baiting them with the thought that if they disobeyed God

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and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they could become more like God.

Of course, this was a trap set by the father of lies (John 8:41-44), who was masquerading as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), and his sole purpose was to strike a blow to the heart of God by hurting the ones whom God loved. And unfortunately, his divisive schemes worked.

In that moment, when both Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the wrong tree, the eyes of their human reason were opened, and for the first time in their lives, they felt shame. This self-awareness of their nakedness caused them to run and hide from God and sew fig leaves together to hide their newfound vulnerabilities.

We often talk about the devastation that affects humanity at this moment, and rightly

so. When they made this unholy alliance with the one who hated all that God loved, the capacity to sin entered the human heart. And from that moment until today, we have seen hurting people hurt people with every generation that has passed.

But what did this act of disobedience do to Father God's heart? After all, Adam and Eve were the firstborn (Luke 3:38) of a family that He dreamed about before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-6). Even though God anticipated their disobedience by providing the once-and-for-all sacrifice of His Son before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), this must have wounded His Father's heart.

Knowing full well that if Adam and Eve had lived forever in their fallen state if they had eaten from the Tree of Life, God banished

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them from the garden in an act of fatherly love and mercy. Though Adam and Eve's hearts had changed then, God's Fatherheart never did. As a foreshadowing of the sacrifice that would be needed to secure humanity's redemption, God covered their nakedness with animal skins that He provided.

Though sin had now brought a separation between us and God (Isaiah 59:1-2), God had not separated Himself from us, for He has always been our ever-present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1). And throughout the Old Testament, He sent prophets and poets, judges and kings and many others as messengers of His heart until the day that He sent His only begotten Son (Hebrews 1:1-3).

When Jesus came to planet Earth, He came to seek and save those who were lost (Luke 19:10). When you think of something or

someone being lost, what comes to mind? If I lose my car keys, I must find them and restore them to my possession.

If a child wanders away from their original home, the parents search for them until they are found. If you think of the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32, you will see a story of a son who left his home and entered into a state of being lost, and his father celebrated his return by declaring that though he was once lost, he was now found (verse 32).

In the same way, Jesus came two thousand years ago to restore humanity's broken relationship with the Father through His once-and-for-all sacrifice. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 tells us that God has reconciled the entire cosmos to Himself in Christ, not counting our sins against us!

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18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. NIV

The word *reconciled* means to restore a broken relationship that once existed. That's what the Father did for us by sending His only Son who destroyed the enemy of our destiny (Hebrews 2:14-18) when He defeated the power of sin, death, and the devil.

Think of it this way... If you had a child who was kidnapped at birth, what would you do to

rescue them? I'm guessing the heart of every loving father and mother would do everything in their power to seek and save your lost little one.

If we have this heart as earthly parents, how much more does our heavenly Father desire to rescue His offspring (Acts 17:28) from the clutches of the deceiver and fully redeem us back to our intended place as His beloved children?

This is beautifully described in Hebrews, where the author speaks of Jesus' motivation to bring many sons and daughters to glory...

Hebrews 2:9-11

9 But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered

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death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

10 In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. 11 Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. NIV

Chapter 6

Nature Or Nurture

1 John 3:10

This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister. NIV

The Apostle John makes a jarring statement in 1 John 3:10: Some people are children of God, and some are children of the devil. If we look at this verse at face value, John seems to be saying that the devil is the father of those who do not do right and do not love their brother and sister.

Even the remotest idea that the enemy of our souls could be at the root of our origin is diabolical. For he is a created being and

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cannot create anything. So what is John saying when he makes this statement? He is not speaking about people's creation origin but about the external influences that cause them to be the way they are.

A few verses earlier in 1 John 3:7-8, John unpacks this a little more... *7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. 8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.* NIV

Jesus makes a similar point in John 8:41-44 when he is talking to the religious leaders of the day about who the predominant influence in their life was...

41 You are doing the works of your own father.” “We are not illegitimate children,” they protested. “The only Father we have is God himself.” 42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. 43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. NIV

Again, it may appear that Jesus is telling these leaders that their father of origin is the devil. But when we begin to see what He was actually saying, He was speaking about the

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predominant influence in their lives, not who their father of origin was.

Jesus told them, *"If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God."* So, if God's fathering influence had guided their hearts, their actions would have lined up with His heart. But since they wanted to kill Jesus, their actions lined up with the father of lies.

If you look at the Greek word for '*father*,' it is '*pater*,' which typically means father or parent. And that is the description used to describe God as Father. But it can also mean... '*the originator of the transmitter of anything*' or '*one who has infused his own spirit into others, who actuates and governs their minds*' or '*one who stands in a father's place*.' These last three definitions of '*pater*' could describe the devil's masquerading influence as a counterfeit father.

Though some believers might think the devil is a father based on these Scriptures, this is not the case. The devil's only ability is to deceive people. Jesus said that when he lies, he speaks his native language.

This is where the psychological study of '*nature versus nurture*' is helpful. It helps us understand the difference between our genetic connections and our external influences. Some elements of who we are come from our biological connection with our parents, and they are called '*nature*.' And then, there are external environmental elements that affect us after we are born, and they are called '*nurture*'. We are all a product of a combination of these influences.

For example, our three children have genetic traits that have been passed onto them by a combination of my wife's and my DNA. But

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environmental influences have also determined their development. Some examples of this would be how we loved them, what life experiences they had, how their friends influenced them, etc.

When we realize that every person on the planet has the same divine origin (nature) because we were all created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), we can appreciate the words found in James 3:9-10...

9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. NIV

Because every person on Earth is an image bearer of Almighty God, we deserve the

dignity and respect of being made in God's likeness. And since we all, in varying degrees, reflect in our humanity, the One who created us, we all have tremendous potential for good. This is what makes the entire human race fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14) because we were all fathered by God Himself when He knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13).

While humanity has a tremendous potential for good by virtue of being made in God's image (nature), we also have a potential for evil because of the demonic influences in the world today (nurture). All we have to do is turn on the news, and we can see the devastation caused daily by broken, hurting people worldwide. Ephesians 2:2 describes the influence of the devil this way...

in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the

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kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. NIV

That is why we all need a new birth (John 3:3), where we are changed from the inside out. This is where we are transformed from being God's offspring through creation (Acts 17:28) to being God's children and heirs through redemption (Romans 8:15-17).

For though we were created in God's image and are indeed His offspring, the Father's eternal plan from before the foundation of the world was to give us a new heart, place His own Spirit within us, and restore us to the royal position of being His sons and daughters in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10).

Through this salvation transformation, the Holy Spirit nurtures us, loves us, and leads us

in the ways of everlasting life as we grow in our sonship (Romans 8:14).

Ephesians 2:1-10

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might

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show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. NIV

Chapter 7

From Offspring To Heir

Acts 17:22-28

22 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. 24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed

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times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' NIV

I would have loved to have been there when the Apostle Paul conversed with these philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens. Paul starts his sermon by using their altar to the 'unknown god' as the launching pad to preach the gospel to them.

He starts by unpacking who this 'unknown god' really is and how the One who created the heavens and the earth also created all nations from one man (Adam). Paul then makes the divine connection between the only true God and everyone on the planet.

This passage of Scripture is a brilliant example of Paul's creative genius in how he builds a bridge to these nonbelievers by quoting one of their own Greek poets (Aratus), who referred to their pagan God, Zeus, in his writings by saying, *'As your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'*

After Paul makes this connection that every person on the planet is an offspring of God, he then calls them to change their thinking (metanoia) about who God is and turn and believe in Jesus Christ.

Acts 17:29-30

29 *"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. 30 In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he*

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commands all people everywhere to repent.

NIV

So, what does it mean to be God's offspring? Is it the same as being God's children? And if so, why is there an invitation to be born of God (John 1:12-13) so that we can become His children if we are already His offspring according to this passage of Scripture?

This might sound confusing until we begin to unpack the Greek word Paul uses to refer to us as God's offspring. The word '*genos*' means... *born, country (-man), diversity, generation, kind (-red), nation, offspring, stock*. It can describe similar things (kind) and someone generationally linked to another person.

I believe the best description of how '*genos*' is used in Acts 17 is that Paul connects with the

Athenians, who indeed all derived their existence from God through their generational link to the first man, Adam. So, in that sense, they are God's offspring because God fathered the human race.

I like how The Passion Translation Bible communicates this idea of all of us having our lineage traced back to God in Acts 17:28-29...

28 It is through him that we live and function and have our identity; just as your own poets have said, 'Our lineage comes from him.' 29 "Since our lineage can be traced back to God, how could we even think that the divine image could be compared to something made of gold, silver, or stone, sculpted by man's artwork and clever imagination? TPT

It is interesting to note that a different Greek word describes those who are children of God

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and have been born again by the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 1:11-13

11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children (teknon) of God-- 13 children (teknon) born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV

The Greek word that John describes here for the word 'children' is 'teknon', which means... *a child (as produced): child, daughter, son. It also describes an intimate and reciprocal relationship formed by the bonds of love.* This word is used most often, especially in the writings of the Apostle John, to describe our familial relationship to God as His children.

For example in 1 John 3:1... *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children (teknon) of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.* NIV

When speaking of our new birth relationship to the Father, Paul also uses the Greek word 'teknon' but he also uses the Greek word 'huios' that describes 'sons or children' as noted in Romans 8:14... *For those who the Spirit of God leads are the children (huios) of God.* And Paul uses both of these terms when he writes Romans 8:15-17...

15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship (huiiothesia). And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's

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children (teknon). 17 Now if we are children (teknon), then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. NIV

The word 'genos' used in Acts 17 for the word 'offspring' describes more of a technical description of a relationship rather than a family father/child heart connection. God is our Father because that is the essence of who He is, but we still need to have a heart transformation where we go from being God's offspring (genos) to His children (teknon). It is important to note that the Greek word 'genos' is not used even once in the New Testament to describe a believer's new birth relationship with their heavenly Father.

An excellent example of how we can see the difference between being someone's offspring

and his child is found in Jesus' discussion with the religious leaders of the day in John 8:31-47. Jesus tells these leaders that anyone who sins is a slave to sin, to which they reply in verse 33... *We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone.* (ESV).

In verse 37, Jesus responds to them by saying... *I know that you are offspring of Abraham; yet you seek to kill me because my word finds no place in you.* And then the conversation continues in verses 39-40... 39 *They answered him, "Abraham is our father."* Jesus said to them, *"If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, 40 but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did.* (ESV)

Jesus tells them that just because they are Abraham's offspring doesn't mean they are

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Abraham's children. Being the children of Abraham requires a heart connection they didn't have. Jesus goes on to tell them that their father is the devil! (John 8:41-44). Yikes!

I believe the same can be said for all humanity. We were all created in God's image and are all God's offspring by virtue of being created by Him. But there needs to be a restored heart connection through the new birth in order for us to complete the redemption process that transforms us into being God's children and heirs by the indwelling of His own Spirit.

The reality is that God has always been Father because that is who He is. In His fathering love, He created all things (1 Corinthians 8:6), including every person in the human race. Psalm 139 clearly demonstrates God's intimate involvement with each one of us. In

that sense, we all came from God, we were all fathered by God, and He loves us equally with His Fatherheart.

But the gospel that Jesus came to bring us into is one where we can be transformed in our relationship with God through the simple act of faith. By believing and receiving God's gift of salvation in Christ, we go from being an offspring (genos) of God to being born anew to be a child of God (teknon, huios) by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this glorious transformation, we receive the Spirit of Sonship that affirms that we are no longer slaves but sons and daughters. This free gift has already been provided for every person on the planet. All we are asked to do is simply believe this to be true.

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Galatians 4:4-7

⁴ *But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law.*

⁵ *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. ⁶And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” ⁷Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir. NLT*

Chapter 8

Our New Birth

John 3:1-8

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." 3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my

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saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." NIV

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus clearly describes to Nicodemus, one of the foremost religious leaders of Israel, how to see the Kingdom of God. Jesus doesn't mince His words here but clearly tells Nicodemus that the only way to perceive the realm of God's Kingdom is through a new birth process where we become born anew by the Spirit of God.

And it is in this divine transformation process where we pass from darkness into light (Colossians 1:13), where we are resurrected and given new life in Christ (Romans 6:5), and where the Spirit of God makes His home in us

(1 Corinthians 6:19) and bears witness with our spirit that we are indeed children of God (Romans 8:15-17).

As Jesus said to Nicodemus, "*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*" If we can see the glorious simplicity in these words, they will dismantle much of the confusion that religious, theological, and double-speak can cause.

Jesus said we must be born of water and the Spirit to enter God's Kingdom realities. It is that simple. Religion and overthinking can bring complexities that are not necessary. We have all had a physical birth, and we all need a spiritual birth as well. This is the wonderful metamorphosis where God gives us a new heart and a new spirit and places His own Spirit in us, as was prophesied in the Old Testament (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

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The truth is that God fathered every one of us in the physical realm (Isaiah 64:8) when He fashioned us in His own image (Genesis 1:27). And it was God Himself who knit us together in our mother's womb (Psalm 139:13) and brought us forth on the day we were born (Psalm 71:6).

In Acts 17:28, the Apostle Paul tells his listeners on Mars Hill that we are all God's offspring through the creation process, and as such, we have all been born of water. But as Jesus said, we all must be born again by the Spirit to be fully restored to God's original intent for our lives.

1 John 3:9 tells us that God's 'seed' remains in those born of God. The Greek word used to describe the Father's seed is '*sperma*,' which in English is sperm. When we begin to comprehend what it means to be born of God,

it will change everything! Because of the finished work of Christ, we are partakers of His divine nature (1 Peter 1:3-4) and co-heirs with Jesus in His amazing Kingdom (Romans 8:15-17) when we dare to believe this to be true (Ephesians 2:8-9).

1 John 3:1

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. NLT

Chapter 9

Faith Simplified

Luke 18:15-17

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." NIV

There is much discussion these days about the role of faith in a believer's life. Some interpret James 2:14-18 (faith without works is dead) as proof that a believer's life is solely based on our ability to perform good works. And others minimize our own participation in

salvation by saying that no amount of our own faith is enough.

In my humble opinion, if we place faith in our own ability to believe, then we are barking up the wrong tree. This kind of faith is misguided because it focuses on our ability to believe rather than God's faithfulness to perform what He has promised.

And yet, there seems to be something in the heart of God that is moved when we believe Him to be true. Hebrews 11:6 says... *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.* NIV

We see how Jesus was moved by an act of faith in the story of a Roman centurion in Luke 7:1-10 who asked Jesus to heal his servant.

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When Jesus was ready to go to his house, the centurion sent messengers to Jesus, saying in verses 6-7... *“Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. 7 That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. NIV*

In verse 9, Jesus responds to this Gentile's incredible trust by saying... *When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” NIV*

The Message Bible says it this way... *“I’ve yet to come across this kind of simple trust anywhere in Israel.*

This, in a nutshell, describes faith. Faith is trust, and trust is relational. If my wife told me that she didn't trust me, that would hurt me to

my core because it would be a statement that she does not think I am trustworthy.

If we look at the Greek word for '*believe*' and '*trust*' (pisteuō), we will see that these words are often interchangeable in the New Testament. The Greek word for '*faith*' (pistis) also shares a common root word. So, there is no question that trust is the foundation of our relationship with God and expresses itself in our ability to believe in His goodness.

While people's acts of faith deeply moved Jesus, He was also disappointed when His disciples struggled with unbelief. When Jesus used the phrase '*Oh you of little faith*' (Matthew 6:30; Matthew 8:26; Matthew 16:8; Luke 12:28), it was when His friends didn't believe Him. Interestingly, the Complete Jewish Bible translates '*Oh you of little faith*' to mean '*Such little trust you have!*'.

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So, back to the question: How much faith is enough? Jesus answered this question perfectly when He said we won't enter the Kingdom unless we receive it, just like a little child would. Do little kids have great theological faith? Do they have the capacity to exercise their believing muscles? The answer is absolutely not.

But what they have instilled in their DNA is their amazing ability to trust. And, of course, little children are the best receivers! If Christmas and birthdays were every day, they would shout... Yay! Little children's ability to simply believe and receive what is promised makes them the greatest in God's Kingdom (Matthew 18:1-5).

So, considering all of this, I believe that God wants to restore our ability to trust Him. I even think He wants to restore the childlike trust we

all had as newborns because little children can believe in ways that grownups never could. And that, my friends, is the faith our Father wants us to have.

1 John 4:16

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. NLT

Chapter 10

The Cross Of Christ

1 John 4:10

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. NIV

The most significant expression of God's love is, and will always be, the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ upon the cross two thousand years ago. For it was in that moment of time that Father, Son, and Spirit, entwined together in their eternal love for humanity, sacrificed everything so we could be redeemed.

There was no split in the Godhead at that moment, no angry Father punishing His Son, and no abandonment of the communion within the Trinity. Father, Son, and Spirit had determined together from before the

foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) that this was the only way humanity could be saved.

Even amid the intense pressure of the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was sweating great drops of blood, He cried out... *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”* (Luke 22:40-44) Even then, I believe Jesus was not left alone but was in the Father's embrace.

For Jesus had said earlier in this same evening to His disciples these words found in John 16:32... *“A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.* NIV

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I believe the Father of Compassion and God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-5) was there amid Jesus' anguish in the garden, and I believe He was there amid the excruciating agony when Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world when He hung broken and beaten on a cross.

Some theologians think the Father had actually forsaken Jesus when He cried out on the cross, '*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*' (Matthew 27:46). Yet even though that heart cry would have expressed the utter devastation that He was feeling as being fully human, it was a prophetic declaration found in the first line of Psalm 22.

If you read the entire psalm, you will see that it describes Jesus' suffering and clearly says in verse 24 that God did not hide His face from Him... *He has not despised or scorned the*

suffering of the afflicted; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help. NIV

So, we can see that there was no separation within the Godhead at the crucifixion because the Father and the Spirit were present. The Apostle Paul even writes in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 that God was '*in Christ*' reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them.

So why did Jesus have to die? Was it the angry mob that killed him? Was it the divisive religious establishment or the Roman soldiers that ultimately murdered Jesus against His will? The answer is none of the above. Jesus Himself said these words in John 10:18... *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and*

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authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” NIV

Jesus voluntarily laid down His life for love's sake. As He said to His disciples in John 15:13... *Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.* NIV And because of God's great love for all of us, Jesus took upon Himself all of our sins and brokenness so we could become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When Jesus died upon that cross, He destroyed, once and for all, the power of sin, death, and the devil that plagued humanity like a disease.

And when He rose from the dead, He became the way for us to be raised too, so even though we are here on earth, we are also simultaneously seated with Him in heavenly

places (Colossians 3:1-4). Since Jesus is the author of life (John 1:4, Acts 3:15), our union with Him has now secured us the same eternal life found in the Son (1 John 5:12).

Jesus' resurrection message heralded a new day when He met Mary in the garden and proclaimed these words in John 20:17... *Go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'*" NLT

This is the heart of the gospel. This is why Jesus died on the cross and rose again... So that His Dad could be our Dad! Hebrews 2:14-18 beautifully describes the motivation of love that Jesus had to secure our redemption...

14 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his

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*death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil--
15 and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. 16 For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. 17 For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. 18 Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. NIV*

If you ever doubt the love of God, look no further than the ultimate sacrifice that was made when Jesus died on the cross for you. For it is in the death, burial, and resurrection of our great High Priest that we are fully restored to our true destiny as much loved

children of Almighty God. All we are called to do is simply believe this to be true.

As 1 Corinthians 1:18 says...

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. NIV

Chapter 11

The Need For Salvation

To understand our need for salvation, we must go back to our origin, when humanity's first couple (Adam and Eve) walked in unhindered fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden. When they chose separation from God (Genesis 3), they made an unholy alliance with the enemy of their soul, which shut down their ability to spiritually commune with God.

From that moment onward, God looked to the day when He would rescue us and place His own Spirit within us (Ezekiel 36:26-27) so that our broken fellowship with God could be restored. Before Jesus went to the cross, He told His disciples that the Holy Spirit, who was with them, would soon be able to indwell them (John 14:15-17).

We see the fulfillment of this promise after Jesus' resurrection when He imparts God's own Spirit to His disciples by breathing on them (John 20:22). It was in this very moment, when the Holy Spirit took up residence within them, that they were born of the Spirit and saved (Galatians 4:6-7; Titus 3:5; Ephesians 1:13-14).

A little while later, just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He told them that the same Spirit that was now in them would soon be poured out on all flesh (Acts 1:4; Acts 2), which happened on the Day of Pentecost. In this divine moment, the possibility of God indwelling a human heart on a global scale was realized.

Salvation is simply the culmination of God's eternal desire to be re-connected with each one of us at a heart level where Father, Son &

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Spirit make their home in us (John 14:23). It is a free gift that we receive that requires no human effort, but just the simplicity of faith to believe that Jesus died for us and rose again to give us eternal life (Romans 10:9; Ephesians 2:8-9).

And in this mysterious, miraculous moment, God places His own Spirit in our hearts, and we become born from above (John 3:3-6; 1 Corinthians 6:19) where the Holy Spirit can now bear witness with our spirit that we are indeed children of God and co-heirs with Christ.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. NLT

Chapter 12

Understanding Free Will

2 Corinthians 3:17

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. NIV

Freedom is at the very heart of who God is. And since we were all created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), He has entrusted us with this beautiful gift too. Often, we are only aware of this privilege once it is taken away. Many of us practically experienced this during the recent global pandemic when some of our fundamental freedoms to move about and visit family were taken away. We all know how painful that was.

Part of this precious gift given to us is the freedom to choose, or what some would call our 'free will.' Whether we know it or not, God

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has woven this into our DNA because it is part of what makes us all wonderfully human. It is a God-given ability to make choices, whether good or bad. Good decisions can lead to positive outcomes, and poor choices can lead to negative ones. The Bible calls this sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-9).

The first time we see this principle at work is in the creation story found in Genesis 2. After God created Adam and Eve, He placed them in the Garden of Eden and gave them charge of everything there. They could eat the fruit of every tree in this spectacular garden except for one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

We read about this in Genesis 2:16-17... *16 And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the*

knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” NIV

So, for the first time in human history, Adam and Eve were presented with a choice. They could choose to feast on all of the good things God prepared for them, or they could choose to eat from the wrong tree and experience the consequences of their disobedience. Unfortunately, we all know that they chose the latter over the former.

I'm sure many of us have wondered why God gave Adam and Eve the option to disobey Him in the first place. After all, we would still live in the garden today without any other options. But the reality is, for love to be present, there has to be freedom to choose or reject it. That is just how love works.

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If I forced my wife to marry me, that wouldn't be love. If I forced our children to obey me unconditionally, that wouldn't be love. Love has to be voluntarily chosen, or it ceases to be love. Because of this, it comes at great risk when you love someone because they may not love you back.

When we think about who God is, the Bible says that *God is love* (1 John 4:16). It isn't only that He loves, but the very fabric of His being is love. The Apostle Paul writes of the amazing humility of God's love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8...

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts,

always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. NIV

When we begin to see through the lens of God's love, we will understand that control and manipulation have no place in God's heart. God is completely free, and He also desires us to experience that same freedom. Part of this God-entrusted attribute is the ability that we all have to respond to or reject His continual initiation of love.

It is incredible how an all-powerful God would put Himself in such a place of vulnerability. A place where He could be rejected and even scorned by the ones He loves with all His heart. But this is the story of the human experience fully displayed when Jesus died on the cross. God did not make us robots, but human beings with the freedom to stay or

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leave, just like the prodigal son did in Luke 15:11-32.

Our Father is not willing for even one person to perish, but for all to come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:9). God has moved heaven and earth for that to be the case. But in reality, His love will not force us into a relationship with His Son. So the Father patiently waits for us and continues to draw us to Jesus (John 6:44-45).

We see the contrast between God's desire and Israel's response clearly in Jeremiah 3:19-20... 19: *"I myself said, "'How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me. 20 But like a woman unfaithful to her husband,*

so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me," declares the Lord. NIV

It may not make sense to our rational mind, but when the eyes of our hearts are opened to see the humble love of Father, Son, and Spirit, it will undo us to the very core of our being. When we have ears to hear what the Spirit is saying, we will know that it cost God everything for us to have a free will. For the disobedience of what happened in the garden was already provided for because Jesus is called '*The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world*' (Revelation 13:8).

And when we begin to understand that Jesus came to the world to set us free from the sin that enslaves us (John 8:34-26), we will start to experience freedom at a whole new level because it is for freedom's sake that Christ has set us free.

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Galatians 5:1

*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.
Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be
burdened again by a yoke of slavery. NIV*

Chapter 13

The Spirit Of Sonship

Galatians 4:6-7

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

NIV

The night before Jesus was going to die, He began to open up His heart to His disciples at a deeper level than ever before and revealed, more clearly, the Father's impending plan for them. In John 14:16-17, Jesus speaks of the Third Person of The Trinity, the Holy Spirit, when He says...

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with

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you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. NIV

From this passage of Scripture, we can see that until that point in human history, the Holy Spirit could come 'upon' people, but He did not 'indwell' people. The only way the Holy Spirit could indwell a human heart would be after Jesus died upon the cross and rose again. Jesus explains this further in John 16:7...

But very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. NIV

Jesus fulfilled this promise to His friends after His resurrection and before His ascension

when He breathed on them and said, '*Receive the Holy Spirit*' (John 20:21-22). When I think of this passage of Scripture, I often wonder if Jesus breathed on all His disciples with one big breath or if He breathed on them one at a time.

Either way, in my active imagination, I think Jesus might have been mirroring the moment in time when His Father breathed into Adam His breath of life in Genesis 2:7. One of the names of the Spirit of God is the Hebrew word '*Ruach*', which means... *spirit, breath, or wind of God*. At this moment in history, God, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, could dwell in a human heart.

After Jesus imparted His Spirit to His friends, He told them to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on all flesh. For this

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was the gift His Father promised the human race in Joel 2:28-32.

Acts 1:4-5

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." NIV

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was indeed poured out on the 120 people patiently waiting in prayer in the upper room. With tongues of fire resting upon each one, they began to preach the good news in many different languages so those present could understand what they were saying in their mother tongue.

At this time, the Apostle Peter rose with great boldness and preached a sermon confirming *'this is that,'* which the prophet Joel declared when he wrote that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17-21). In response to Peter's gospel message, many in the crowd responded with the question... *'Brothers, what shall we do?'*

Peter replied in Acts 2:38-39... 38 *"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."* NIV

And 3,000 people responded that day, were born again, received the gift of the Holy Spirit, and were added to the church. We need to know that the promised outpouring on all flesh

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distinctly differed from the indwelling Holy Spirit. Though God's Spirit was now 'on' all people, He was not 'in' all people.

In Acts 9:1-19, we read the story of Saul's Damascus Road conversion after he had a vision of Jesus. In verse 17, we read how a disciple named Ananias was sent to Paul to pray for him... *Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit."*

NIV

We read another account of the Apostle Paul's life in Acts 19:1-6 where Paul arrives at Ephesus and asks these new followers of Christ if they have yet received the Holy Spirit. To which they replied... *We didn't even know*

there was a Holy Spirit. In response, Paul laid his hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is referred to by Jesus as '*the Spirit of your Father*' (Matthew 10:17-20), and The Apostle Paul refers to him as '*the Spirit of the Son*' (Galatians 4:6-7). And in Romans 8:9, Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as '*the Spirit of Christ*'...

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. NIV

The glorious message of the gospel is that Jesus died on the cross and rose again so that His Father could become our Father (John 20:17). As a result of this glorious act of

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love, we can become the dwelling place of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

In John 14:23, Jesus makes this promise...
“Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. NIV

How do both Father and Son make their home in us? But by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19), which we receive at the moment of our new birth (Titus 3:5).

And the precious Holy Spirit of Sonship that is now dwelling within us continually affirms that we are God’s children and His heirs and joint heirs with our big brother, Jesus.

Ephesians 1:13-14

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory. NIV

Chapter 14

The Good News Of The Kingdom

Luke 4:43

But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” NIV

Jesus spoke more about the Kingdom of God than He did of any other topic in the gospels. The good news of the Kingdom of God is meant to be the centerpiece of the Christian life. We know it is a Kingdom that cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28-29); it is not of this world (John 18:36), and it indwells us (Luke 17:20-21).

Wherever Jesus went, He proclaimed the good news of this Kingdom (Matthew 24:14). He also encouraged us to make our pursuit of the Kingdom of God our top priority (Matthew

6:33) and to ask our Father for His Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10)

If we advertised we were having a Kingdom conference, it would be well attended. After all, there is something inside every believer that knows that this is what we were created for. So, what does living in the Kingdom mean? Is it a greater awakening to God's plan and purpose for humanity? Absolutely! Is it a greater empowering of the church on planet Earth to be a manifestation of signs, wonders, and miracles? Without question!

Every attribute of the Kingdom is spectacular. Every gift, every ministry office, and good work we do under the direction of the Holy Spirit... all God-ordained and blessed. But are these expressions of the Kingdom the actual substance of the Kingdom?

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This is where we can get distracted if we aren't careful. I like to call these expressions of the Kingdom 'shiny objects.' They are beautiful, valuable, and necessary, but they were never meant to be the object of our pursuit.

If we don't perceive the Kingdom from the Trinity's perspective, we will surely be derailed in our pursuit of it. If we assume this orphan world's broken values are the same as the Kingdom's, we will be sadly mistaken.

In Matthew 18:1-5, Jesus told His disciples that a little child is the greatest in God's Kingdom. In Matthew 11:25-26, Jesus declares that His Father hides the Kingdom from the wise and reveals it to babies. In Luke 18:15-17, Jesus says that the Kingdom belongs to little children.

Paul made it clear that God's Kingdom isn't revealed through the strong, the wise, and the rich but to the weak, the foolish, and the poor (1 Corinthians 1:26-31). If we think that the Kingdom is for those at '*the top of the food chain*,' think again, for it is counterintuitive to everything we esteem as the best of our fallen world.

When Jesus often announced the good news of the Kingdom, it was accompanied by the invitation to repent. There is a challenge to this call to repentance because when we think of this word, it often is associated with feelings of guilt and shame. But the good news of the good news is that the word 'repent' actually doesn't exist as many of the translators have suggested it does. The actual Greek word that Jesus used is *metanoia*, which means '*a change of mind*'.

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Of course, that change of mind also implies a complete turning around, so I'm guessing that is why the translators felt that repentance was an appropriate description. But the word repent comes from the idea that we must do penance, which means 'self-punishment.' There is nothing further from the truth.

True metanoia (change of mind) is beautifully described in Romans 12:1-2... *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.* NIV

Simply put, the Bible says that believers have '*the mind of Christ*' (1 Corinthians 2:16), so the transformation that comes when we receive the good news of the Kingdom is that we begin to think of God's thoughts that are aligned with His plan and purpose for our lives! It is as transformational as when a caterpillar becomes a butterfly!

Would you be willing to ask God to redefine your understanding of His Kingdom and embrace it as it is, not how the broken systems of this world define it? The adult 'you' may struggle with this a bit, but the little child in you is ready, willing, and able to embrace the good news of God's Kingdom in all its glory!

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Luke 12:32

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.

NIV

Chapter 15

The Little Key That Unlocks The Kingdom

Matthew 11:25-26

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do. NIV

In a world that celebrates the wise and the learned, this might not come as good news because Jesus declares that His Father actually hides the things of the Kingdom from those society honors the most. And to make this declaration even more offensive to our grown-up intellect, Jesus says that the Father is delighted to reveal *'these things'* to little children (nēpios), which means *untaught, unskilled, wordless infants*.

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The gospel reality is that the pathway to Kingdom greatness is not achieved by working harder but by growing smaller in your heart. A dear friend, Jack Winter, used to say, *'The smaller we become, the bigger our heavenly Father can become on our behalf.'* My encouragement is to try not to understand these things through the paradigm of an adult mindset because if you do, it probably won't make sense.

Just as Nicodemus couldn't grasp the concept of being born again (John 3:1-12), the 'big you' might find yourself frustrated by what you might consider an oversimplification of God's Kingdom. However, I genuinely believe there is still a little child inside of you waiting to be revealed to the world again. And in this holy place in your heart, Jesus says the Kingdom dwells (Luke 17:24).

Just as the life of a tree is revealed through every growth ring in its trunk, you are the summation of every life experience you have ever had. And in each of these growth rings, your heavenly Father wants to pour out His love again and again by His Spirit (Romans 5:5).

Would you be willing to ask your heavenly Dad to pour His love into the beautiful places in your heart where the one-year-old in you is still alive and well? I believe that all of heaven's resources are ready, willing, and able to reveal the Father's amazing Kingdom, which Jesus said His Father is delighted to give us (Luke 12:32).

All we have to do is to receive this Kingdom just like a little child would!

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Luke 18:15-17

15 People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." NIV

Chapter 16

Hearing The Father Cry

John 14:6-8

6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him. 8 Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." NIV

Over 25 years ago, I created a sermon illustration called 'Father's Love Letter'. This paraphrased compilation of 50 Bible passages was presented as a video in the form of a love letter in January 1999 after a message I shared on God's love.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have imagined that this simple message would go

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viral on the Internet, and over 25 years later... it is still going! But that is the journey my wife and I have been on, and we have been privileged to hear from thousands of people about how this simple love letter has impacted their hearts.

Since the Father's Love Letter is available in over 125 language translations and has been shared in many nations worldwide, I am convinced that the message of God's Fatherheart for the world is relevant to every person on the planet.

And I would go as far as saying that what Philip said to Jesus in John 14:8 articulates the cry of every human heart: *“Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.”* The NLT says it this way: *“Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.”*

I am so thankful that Jesus responded to Philip's heart cry in verses 9-11...

9 Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. NIV

For Jesus was the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and the exact representation of His being (Hebrews 1:3). Everything that Jesus did while He was on Earth was a mirror image of His Father. When we begin to

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understand that this is why Jesus came, to bring a revelation of His Dad to the world, we can better grasp the purpose of His death, burial, and resurrection. It was so His Father could be our Father (John 20:17).

Over the years, we have worked with many evangelists and evangelical organizations that have used the Father's Love Letter as an evangelistic tool to share the gospel. It has even been delivered door to door in every home in entire nations. It has been given out in prisons, strip clubs, and brothels, as well as churches, schools, and playgrounds.

We have heard repeatedly that the message of God's parental love found in the love letter seems to be the quickest way to help people connect with their foundational need for love. Every person on this planet shares this most basic need. Whether we have known our

biological parents or not, we have all had a mom and a dad. As a result, we all have the same longing to be loved, accepted, and affirmed by them.

When we realize that Jesus came to bring us home to His Father (John 14:6) and to love us just like His Father loved Him (John 15:9), it is clear that every person in the world, whether they realize it or not, needs this foundational need to be loved by God... as a Father.

Before Jack Winter prayed for me to receive a deeper revelation of the Father's love for me, he asked me a question. He said, 'Barry, tell me about your father'. This simple question immediately brought up painful memories in my heart that built a bridge to the little boy inside of me that still needed to be loved. As I began to weep, feeling all of the pain of not being loved like I needed to be loved, the door

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of my heart was opened wide for the love of my Father to be poured in.

God promises to be a father to the fatherless and He puts the lonely in families (Psalm 68:5). I believe this is the most foundational human heart need. When we help people reconnect with their own need to be loved by the Perfect Father, it opens up their ability to receive the good news of why Jesus came two thousand years ago—so that His Father could become our Father!

John 16:25-27

25 “Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.

26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your

behalf. 27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. NIV

Chapter 17

The Father Of Compassion

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. 4 He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. NLT

I want to touch on the topic of suffering for just a moment. First and foremost, I don't want to in any way try to explain or rationalize the devastation we see all around us in our world. There is something in each of us that sees injustice and suffering as something that should not exist. And rightly so.

I believe that is why even death itself seems so foreign to us when we lose a loved one

because we were never created to die. King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:11 that *God placed eternity in our hearts.*

Yet we see that it so clearly and painfully surrounds us as we continue living outside the Garden of Eden that God originally intended for us. When we understand that this was never our heavenly Father's intent in the first place, we can perhaps begin to see how He meets us amid our pain.

For me personally, to try and reconcile why so many bad things happen to good people is something that I just can't understand. I can remember in the early days of our daughter's Leukemia diagnosis, when we didn't even know if our daughter would survive those first few days, I asked God the 'why?' question.

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I was feeling so gutted, watching our 25-year-old daughter suffering so much, who was still uncertain about the outcome of her treatment. But just after I asked the question, I realized no answer that God could provide would ever justify the devastating injustice of our daughter's bloodstream being filled with cancerous cells.

It wasn't long after I asked this question to God that I was walking the lonely 20-minute walk I took every night to get our car after spending the day at the cancer hospital when I asked another question.

"Where are you, Father?" I cried out. *"I don't feel your presence, and I feel like I am on auto-pilot, trying to be strong for my family!"* Without any words spoken, it was like a veil had been lifted off of my being, and I could

sense where my heavenly Father was throughout all of my anguish.

He was walking alongside me all along, silently suffering with me. In this very profound moment, I realized that God understood my deepest, darkest pain, and it was at that moment I felt comforted at a level I desperately needed.

That was over 10 years ago, and our daughter did beat this cancer after enduring almost daily chemotherapy treatment for 2 1/2 years. Many times since this first experience, I have needed the comforting reassurance of the Father of Compassion.

The Latin word for compassion (*compassio*) means '*to suffer together.*' When we begin to see that God has not removed Himself from the suffering of His much-loved children, it will

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comfort our broken and battered hearts,
whatever we face.

In the place of receiving profound comfort from the source of all comfort, we can, in turn, comfort one another. While this understanding of God's compassionate heart doesn't remove our pain, we can take heart that amid anything we face this side of heaven, our heavenly Father enters into our suffering in a beautiful expression of His tender loving kindness.

When I think of the over 8 billion people on the planet today and how our Father does not insulate Himself from the sufferings of each of us, I am overwhelmed by His love and mercy. I pray you will be overwhelmed by His love and mercy, too! Psalm 34:18 says... *The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.* NLT

When God's nearness becomes an experiential reality to us by His Holy Spirit in our union with Christ, the peace that passes understanding will begin to calm every storm in our hearts (Philippians 4:7). When we know that God wants us to cast every care onto Him because He cares for us (1 Peter 5:7), all of a sudden, we won't feel alone anymore.

While the revelation of God's compassionate heart for every person on the planet does not answer all our questions about why bad things happen, hopefully, amid all our struggles, we will feel carried by God (Isaiah 46:3-4).

...All the while knowing that one day, God will right every wrong and wipe away every tear from our eyes.

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Revelation 21:1-4

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone.

2 And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven like a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

3 I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, God's home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." NLT

Chapter 18

God's Promise To Be A Father To You

2 Corinthians 6:18

And, "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." NIV

You might have read this Bible verse and wondered how it applies to you. How could Almighty God possibly be a Father to you when you already have biological parents? This foundational question strikes at the very heart of our origin.

If we think that we are just the result of a biological interaction between our parents at the moment of our conception and nothing more, then the meaning of our lives is reduced to our life span here on earth. But what if we weren't the result of some random,

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evolutionary process but rather created in the image of a loving God who destined us to be His children? How would that change our perspective on life?

If we look to the Bible as the source of absolute truth and inspiration, we will see that there has always been a divine plan for the human race... From before the foundation of the world. And this divine intention was born out of a loving Father's eternal desire to have many children (Romans 8:29).

If we have eyes to see it, we will begin to realize that the Old Testament is a story of a Father who lost His children in a garden, and the New Testament is the story of His loving Son who came to get us back.

When we are awakened to the Fatherheart of God and His amazing love for us in Jesus

Christ, we will be re-connected with our true destiny as His beloved children. For in His great love, God fathered the human race and lovingly created the heavens and the earth as a beautiful place in which His children could live. Because while creating is what God does, Father is who He is.

It is God's eternal desire that we all experience a spiritual rebirth into the heart reality that He truly is our Father. In this supernatural process, we are redeemed, restored, and fully reconciled to the One who is love itself. Through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, we are transformed from being God's offspring by creation to being His heirs.

This is what we were created for. This is our eternal destiny: to live as much-loved children of Almighty God in His family forever. This is a promise that we can take to the bank.

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Ephesians 1:3-6

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.

5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. NLT

Chapter 19

Coming Home To Love

The common denominator of every heart is our foundational need for family love. Because we all have biological parents, this need to be loved is common in every culture.

I believe that when people really connect their need for family love to the source of all love, which is the embrace of the Trinity, something familiar will resonate in the very core of their being.

I believe what we call evangelism is, at its core, the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-21), where we proclaim the finished work of Christ to those who have yet to be reconciled to the Father.

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While this reconciliation needs to happen for every prodigal child in the world today, it also needs to happen for those who best identify with the elder brother in the prodigal son story (Luke 15:11-32).

Both sons in the story were equally lost and separated from the experiential reality of their father's love, and the invitation from their father was for both of them to come home.

For home is what we were created for, and home is where we all belong. We know the prodigal son accepted the invitation and turned his heart towards home, but we don't know if his older brother did.

May God give us the wisdom to help people in every culture get in touch with their foundational need to be loved so we can simply point their hearts toward home.

For when people truly discover that their very existence was birthed in the heart of a loving Father before the foundation of the world, their hearts will truly be awakened to the family love they were created to experience.

I am so thankful that Jesus Christ, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29), provided our way home (John 14:1-6). Home to the family love we were created to experience, home to our divine destiny as God's beloved heirs, and home to the Father we have looked for all our lives.

John 14:1-2

"Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. 2 There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? NLT

Chapter 20

What Happens In Eternity?

1 Corinthians 15:21-28

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life.

23 But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. 24 After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power.

25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. 26 And the last

enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.)

28 Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God's authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere. NLT

There are many debates these days about what happens after we die. Believers in Christ have the assurance of salvation (Romans 10:13), the promise of eternal life (1 John 2:25), and the knowledge that we won't be condemned (Romans 8:1). But what about those who have not yet been transformed by the love of God in Christ?

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This topic is being increasingly debated within the Christian community. Some definitively declare who gets judged and how, and others question whether there is any judgment at all.

Scripture clearly teaches that there are definitely consequences for how we live this side of heaven (Matthew 12:36-37). But the reality is, other than God Himself, no one really knows how these eternal implications will be measured out and to whom.

The way I see the pathway to eternal life is the way Jesus defined it in John 17:3... *Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*
NIV

So we proclaim this over and over again (John 10:10), with the sobering realization that whoever does not have the Son does not have

life (1 John 5:12). But at the end of the day, only God knows how this will unfold in eternity.

I feel we spend way too much time defining things that are undefinable by human standards, especially when our opinions can cause so much hurt and division. And that is why I believe we should invest all our time telling people how much they are loved by God NOW because in reality, what we do in this present life has the potential to impact a person's life forever!

Though I refuse to speculate on things way above my own pay grade, I still believe we need to be mindful that the Bible teaches there is a judgment after this life (Hebrews 9:27). But what does that judgment look like for each person individually? I don't know. All I know is it can be pretty sobering to think of

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the possible eternal consequences of reaping what we have sown (Galatians 6:7-9).

If we are to deny that some form of accountability awaits each person, whether the Judgment Seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10-11) or the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-5), we will need to ignore many passages of Scripture that say otherwise. Even Jesus Himself said when we believe in Him, we pass from death to life and are not judged (John 5:21-24).

Yet there is something else to consider. When we think of judgment, we usually think of it in a negative context. For example, if someone gets judged, they get punished. But the reality is that there is a righteous judgment that we don't seem to consider when thinking of eternity.

After all, a good judge will rule in favor of the oppressed; a kind judge will protect the vulnerable, and a righteous judge will side with those abused.

So when I think of eternal judgment, first and foremost, I remember the words spoken by Jesus in John 3:16-17... *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him.* NIV

With this in mind, I choose to place my hope in my loving Father, who is both just and merciful. And I have no theological problem entrusting the fate of every person on this planet to His loving yet righteous care... including me! And whatever that judgment ends up being, it will be right and true

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because we know the heart of the One who is judging.

For I am confident on that great and glorious day when we all stand before Him, I believe He will right every wrong and show Himself to be far kinder, loving, and just than we all could have imagined.

For this reason, we proclaim the good news for all who have ears to hear it, doing all we can to convince people that Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14-15) and His Father wants everyone to be saved (2 Peter 3:9).

And through simply believing and receiving the free gift that has already been provided for each one of us, all fear of judgment will be driven out of our hearts by the perfect love of God.

1 John 4:18-19

18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. NIV

Chapter 21

God's Heart For You

If you want to learn more about God's eternal plan and purpose for your extraordinary life, here are some life-changing Scriptural truths to remind you of your infinite value to God.

While God partnered with your earthly parents in your creation, the life-changing reality is... It was God, in His fathering love, who formed you. Isaiah 64:8

He is the One who lovingly knit you together in your mother's womb and made you the wonderful one-of-a-kind person you have become. Psalm 139:13-14

And it was God Himself who was there to welcome you on the day you were born. Psalm 71:6

Even if your earthly parents didn't plan your arrival, you can be comforted knowing that your Heavenly Father did. Psalm 27:10

Because you were a dream in His heart long before He created the world. Ephesians 1:3-5

That means there has never been a time in all of eternity when you weren't loved. Jeremiah 31:3

So today, God wants you to know that He has always had a father's heart towards you. 2 Corinthians 6:18

Because you are His beloved offspring. Acts 17:28

That is why every family in heaven and on earth derives its name from God's fatherhood. Ephesians 3:14-15

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Because while creating is what God does,
Father is who He is. Jeremiah 3:19

And He wants to awaken you to this reality
today because He is closer than you could
possibly imagine. Psalm 139:1-12

For in Him, you live and move and have your
being. Acts 17:24-28

Every strand of your DNA carries within it the
loving imprint of your Creator. Genesis 1:27

And every molecule in the universe is held
together through the bond of love that causes
all things to exist. Colossians 1:16-17

Each sunrise is a promise of His enduring
faithfulness for the coming day. Lamentations
3:22-23

And every sunset is God's loving reminder that He will keep you safe while you sleep.

Psalms 4:8

He does all this because God is a loving Father. 1 Corinthians 8:6

Unfortunately, many people don't see Him that way because of distorted religious beliefs.

Matthew 23

The truth is God is not distant and angry, as some might suggest, but He is the complete expression of love. 1 John 4:16

And today, He longs for you to know Him as your loving Father. John 16:25-27

For you originated in His heart before you were conceived. Jeremiah 1:5

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And He considers you one of His greatest masterpieces. Ephesians 2:10

If you feel in any way alone and separated from God, He understands why, and His heart is filled with compassion for you. Psalm 103:13-14

But the reality is, even in this moment, nothing can separate you from His love. Romans 8:35-39

And that love is fully expressed itself in the person of God's only Son, Jesus Christ, two thousand years ago. John 3:16-17

Jesus is the exact representation of His Father's being and the image of the invisible God. Colossians 1:15

He came to earth to show us what His Father was really like. John 14:9-10

And to dismantle every misconception of God's nature that was distorted by the powers of darkness. John 8:41-44

For what darkness tried to destroy, Jesus came to rescue and redeem. John 10:10

When He willingly laid down His own life on the cross, He destroyed, once and for all, the delusion that sin brought to humanity, that made us feel separated from God. Romans 5:6-8

And when He rose from the dead three days later, He triumphed over death itself, boldly proclaiming that His Father was our Father, and His God was our God. John 20:17

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In this ultimate act of love, God the Father reconciled the entire world to Himself through Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

So, no longer do we need to feel alienated in our minds from our loving Father because of the shame that sin brings. Colossians 1:21-22

Now, because of what Jesus has done, we can know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Almighty God is truly our Dad! Romans 8:15-17

Deep within you, a divine spark is waiting to be re-ignited by this life-changing truth. John 3:3-6; Romans 13:11; Titus 3:5

Being a child of God is the eternal destiny you were created to experience. Romans 8:29

And the truth that will ultimately set you free.
John 8:32

Free to be who God intended you always to
be. Hebrews 2:10-11

Free to live life with a sense of true meaning
and purpose. Jeremiah 29:11

Knowing fully that you are completely loved
and accepted by your Heavenly Father. 1
John 3:1

In this place of belonging forever, perfect love
will usurp fear. 1 John 4:18

Shame will be exchanged for an eternal
inheritance. Isaiah 61:7

And a supernatural sense of peace and well-
being will flood your soul. Romans 15:13

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This sacrificial gift of love has already been freely given to the entire human race. 1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 4:10

For it is God's heart that not even one person would be left out. 2 Peter 3:9

But like any gift given, it needs to be received to be experienced. John 1:12-13

Because it is our simple faith that activates all of its benefits. Ephesians 2:8-9; Romans 5:1-2

All you need to do is ask God to make His beloved Son Jesus real to you. John 6:44-45

And then your Heavenly Dad will do the rest. Philippians 1:6

After all, He is your true Father and wants you to come home. Luke 15:11-24

Home to the special place Jesus has already secured for you in His heart. John 14:1-3

A beautiful place of love and safety, nestled in the secure grip of both Father and Son forever. John 10:28-30

And as you turn your heart towards home, you will discover that Father and Son have also made their home in you. John 14:23

Chapter 22

My Personal Homecoming

As one who has been greatly impacted by God's love for me over the past 26 years, I have come to see the Trinity differently than I did in the first 22 years of my Christian journey before this revelation.

Without even realizing it, my view of the First Person in the Triune God was shaped more by my earthly father's experience than the Father that Jesus revealed during His life on earth. But there is a saying... *'You don't know what you don't know,'* and that applied to all the assumptions I made of God's Fatherheart that were forged in the pain of me growing up with a dad who was quite hurt when he was growing up.

Once I began to realize that my paradigm of what a father was like was truly distorted and didn't accurately reflect the image of God that was revealed in Jesus' life, I could, for the first time in my 22 years of being a Christian, turn my heart towards home.

My homecoming found its ultimate expression in the embrace of Jack Winter, who championed the Father's love to a generation. Before he gave me a hug that changed my life, he asked me a simple question... "*Barry, tell me about your relationship with your dad.*"

In that moment, a very painful memory came to mind where my dad hurt me, and that memory resurfaced many other memories that completely overwhelmed me. It was as if Jack's question triggered a response deep within me that reconnected me with my

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lifelong vain pursuit of needing my father's affirmation and affection.

Jack then asked me another question. He said, "*Can you be a little boy that needs to be loved?*"

It wasn't like I had to try to be a little boy in response to Jack's question. It was as if these painful memories became the bridge to the little boy inside me that was there all along. At that moment, I began to sob uncontrollably, feeling a weight of devastation and disappointment that I wasn't even aware was there in the core of my being.

In hindsight, I did my best to mask my 37 years of not feeling loved by living a life of performance and achievement. I secretly hoped that one day, if I worked hard enough, I would receive the love I desperately craved.

As early as I can remember, I did my absolute best to make my dad happy, which seemed hard. My dad wasn't a happy man, mainly because of the pain he experienced growing up with an emotionally disconnected, critical father and a bitter mother who ultimately disowned him.

It wasn't my dad's fault that he was the way he was. I'm sure he did his very best to love me the best way he knew how, but as the saying goes... '*You can only give away what you first received.*' But what my dad received in his formative years caused him to become an alcoholic while he was still a teenager who was angry and withdrawn.

I tried to get my dad's attention through performance as early as I can remember. Mixed between a desire to have his affirmation and a fear of his angry disapproval,

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I would do my best to excel at everything I could. When I would bring home a good report card from school, it was in the hope that I would hear in the very depth of my heart the words, *'Well done, son. I love you and am so proud of you.'*

While I'm sure my dad did his best to show his approval (he used to give me 25 cents for an 'A' and 10 cents for a 'B'), the one thing I was longing for, he was simply unable to give me. And that was because it was never given to him.

Here is just one example of the dynamics between me and my dad...

My dad was a blue belt in judo when he suffered an injury in a judo demonstration that prevented him from continuing in the sport. He then transferred his passion for judo onto

both me and my big brother, hoping that we would be an extension of his ambitions.

After building a dojo (judo training area) in our basement, he began a rigorous training program of what seemed like endless repetition of exercises and techniques to prepare us to fight in judo tournaments.

I was seven at the time, and my brother was ten. I don't think we had the competitive fires needed to fight opponents to beat them, but we had an even greater motivation. ...And that was the love of our dad.

Every time I went on a judo mat to fight an opponent, it was never for the love of the sport. It was always for the love of my father. And when I would lose a match, sometimes I would cry—not because I was a poor sport, but because I felt like I let my dad down.

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This motivation caused my brother and I to rapidly advance in judo because we could not emotionally afford to lose. As a result of this drive to please my dad, I received my junior brown belt at eleven years of age. But the sad reality was that no matter how many trophies I won, the love I sought was always beyond my grasp.

This unhealthy need to achieve affected every area of my life: academics, sports, my career in the newspaper business, and even my church involvement. After becoming a Christian at 15, I became a highly motivated worker bee in my 'Kingdom pursuits, ' which made me very useful in any church or ministry organization I was involved with.

After seven different job promotions and reaching the highest-level position I could attain in the newspaper I worked for, I left my

advertising career after 19 years and entered full-time pastoral ministry. I didn't realize it then, but my relentless search for affirmation led me to think that becoming a pastor might ultimately make God happy with me and thus earn His approval.

I knew I had performance issues all my life, but I hoped that giving myself 24/7 to ministry might give me a greater sense of peace in this new role. Unfortunately, though, it had the opposite effect. Since the expansion of God's Kingdom is never-ending, and the church's needs felt the same way, my performance issues didn't subside—they went through the roof!

Now, what was I to do? My response was to keep working, praying, and doing, doing, doing, with the hopes that I would finally be able to do enough one day. But that day never

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came in the performance-based grid of what I assumed would make God happy.

Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought I was making assumptions about the Fatherhood of God that were based on my own broken father experiences, but that is what I was doing.

Then, in October 1997, I went to a Catch the Fire conference in Toronto, where there was a special invitation for pastors to come forward and receive prayer. Before I became a pastor, I always resented this type of special treatment for those in ministry and didn't think it was fair. But now, I realized that pastors need all the prayers they can get, so I rushed to the front, hoping God would work through one of the conference speakers to sort out all my performance issues.

It was as if God was speaking to every conference speaker not to pray with me as they would pray for people around me but then go on to others. As my faith began to nosedive because no one was praying for me, a young man, probably no older than 20, approached me and put his hand on my shoulder.

He said, *'I see this picture of you as a baby, and you are in your mother's womb. And God is your Father, and right now He is re-attaching your umbilical cord to Himself'*. When this young man prayed, I didn't feel a thing but thanked him and returned to my seat.

As I sat down, it was like the penny dropped in my soul, and I finally realized the source of my over-the-top drivenness all my life. I was looking for the love of a father. More

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specifically, I was looking for the love of my heavenly Father.

And so that began a new season in my life, where what I would call my 'Father hunger' led me to go to every meeting where the topic was knowing God as Father. The next month, I attended a Father Loves You conference at the same church in Toronto, where I had a chance to hear a man named Jack Winter share about the love of the Father.

At the end of one of his sessions, he invited a young woman to come on stage so he could demonstrate how he prays for people. This young woman never knew her biological father, and as she wept telling Jack that, he took her into his arms and gently prayed for her to receive a hug from her heavenly Dad.

As I watched this occur, along with the thousands of people present at this conference, I wished for something. It wasn't a prayer but only a secret wish in my heart that my Abba was listening to. With a sigh, I wished that Jack Winter would do that for me, but it simply could not be possible with so many people in attendance.

I left that conference with my Father's hunger intact, and my search continued. Seven months later, friends of mine invited me to attend a men's retreat in North Bay, Ontario, where two men would speak on the Fatherheart of God. These two men were Jack Winter and James Jordan.

And even though I had forgotten my wish to have Jack Winter hug me, God didn't forget. In the last evening meeting of this men's retreat, Jack was looking for a 'Guinea pig' to

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demonstrate to the rest of the men in attendance how he prayed for people.

My friend who invited me to this event then asked me if I was okay with Jack praying for me in front of all the other guys. I said 'yes' without giving much thought to it, and I found myself standing beside Jack, facing all the men at the retreat.

After asking me about my dad and asking if I could be a little boy who needs to be loved, he invited me to wrap my arms around his neck like I would hug a father. Before Jack could put his customary dish towel on his shoulder, I wrapped my arms around his neck, all the while sobbing like a little boy.

Jack prayed a simple prayer... *'Father, make my arms your arms for your son because he has never known a father like you.'* Wave upon

wave of liquid love began to pour into this brokenhearted little boy. At that moment, I didn't feel like I was in the arms of Jack Winter, but for the first time in my life, I felt like I was in the loving arms of my heavenly Father.

After our extended embrace, I told Jack that for the first time in my 22 years as a Christian, I realized why Jesus died on the cross for me. It was so that His Father could become my Father. And I now knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this is what I was created for—to be a much-loved son of Almighty God.

When I got home from the men's retreat, I told my wife what had happened and gave her the same hug I had received through Jack Winter. She experienced a homecoming, too. That was over 26 years ago, and our lives haven't been the same since.

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After coming into this revelation of love, I began to see the Scriptures through my new lens of love. One day, I asked God to help me comprehend some of these Bible verses that spoke of His love for the world that were found from Genesis to Revelation. I felt He spoke to my heart these words...

If you put some of these Scriptures in the right order, they will form a love letter from Me to the world.

In January 1999, I shared a sermon illustration called 'Father's Love Letter' at the end of a message I was sharing on the love of God.

And now, I want to share it with you...

Chapter 23

Father's Love Letter

An intimate message from God to you.

The words you are about to experience are true. They will change your life if you let them. For they come from the very heart of God. He loves YOU. And He is the Father you have been looking for all your life. This is His love letter to you.

My Child,

You may not know me, but I know everything about you. Psalm 139:1

I know when you sit down and when you rise up. Psalm 139:2

I am familiar with all your ways. Psalm 139:3

There is one God and Father of us all

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered. Matthew 10:29-31

For you were made in my image.

Genesis 1:27

In me you live and move and have your being.

Acts 17:28

For you are my offspring. Acts 17:28

I knew you even before you were conceived.

Jeremiah 1:4-5

I chose you when I planned creation.

Ephesians 1:11-12

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book. Psalm 139:15-16

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live. Acts 17:26

You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Psalm 139:14

I knit you together in your mother's womb.

Psalm 139:13

And brought you forth on the day you were born. Psalm 71:6

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me. John 8:41-44

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love. 1 John 4:16

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you.

1 John 3:1

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Simply because you are my child and I am your Father. 1 John 3:1

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could. Matthew 7:11

For I am the perfect father. Matthew 5:48

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand. James 1:17

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs. Matthew 6:31-33

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope. Jeremiah 29:11

Because I love you with an everlasting love.
Jeremiah 31:3

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore. Psalm 139:17-18

And I rejoice over you with singing.

Zephaniah 3:17

I will never stop doing good to you.

Jeremiah 32:40

For you are my treasured possession.

Exodus 19:5

I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul. Jeremiah 32:41

And I want to show you great and marvelous things. Jeremiah 33:3

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me. Deuteronomy 4:29

There is one God and Father of us all

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart. Psalm 37:4

For it is I who gave you those desires.

Philippians 2:13

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine. Ephesians 3:20

For I am your greatest encourager.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you. Psalm 34:18

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart. Isaiah 40:11

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes. Revelation 21:3-4

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth. Revelation 21:3-4

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus. John 17:23

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed.
John 17:26

He is the exact representation of my being.
Hebrews 1:3

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you. Romans 8:31

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

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Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you. 1 John 4:10

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love. Romans 8:31-32

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me. 1 John 2:23

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again. Romans 8:38-39

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. Luke 15:7

I have always been Father, and will always be Father. Ephesians 3:14-15

My question is...Will you be my child?

John 1:12-13

I am waiting for you. Luke 15:11-32

Love, Your Dad.

Almighty God

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About The Author - Barry Adams

Barry came into a life-changing revelation that Almighty God was really his Dad when a man named Jack Winter gave him a hug. In response to this encounter with the love of God, he created a sermon illustration called Father's Love Letter.

Never in his wildest dreams did he imagine that this simple sermon illustration (first presented in January 1999) would be translated into 125+ languages, touching the hearts of many people worldwide.

Barry & his wife, Anneliese, founded Father Heart Communications in 2000 to facilitate their mandate to simply point people's hearts toward home using the spoken word and through the Internet on their websites... FathersLoveLetter.com, 365Promises.com, Fatherheart.tv, GodLovesYou.tv & OneFather.com

Creating is *what* God does. **Father** is *who* He is.

God fathered our first birth through partnering with our biological parents, and He fathers our second birth through His indwelling Holy Spirit when we simply dare to believe this is true.

This book was written to declare the very essence of God's heart as a Father and His great love for the human race expressed through the life of His Son.

Ephesians 4:4-6

For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. NLT



Barry Adams encountered a life-changing revelation of the Fatherheart of God back in 1998 that totally transformed the way He saw God as Father and how he saw himself as a child of God. This resulted in the creation of a sermon illustration called 'Father's Love Letter' that became an Internet phenomenon and is now available in over 125 languages. Visit OneFather.com to find out more.