

"Not Like That, Like This"

Week 2

KEY PASSAGES:

Matthew 6:5-7 when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Matt. 6:9 "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.'"

Galatians 3:27-28 All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus!

Hosea 11:9 For I am God, and not a man—the Holy One among you.

Genesis 1:27: God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Deuteronomy 32:18 You were unmindful of the Rock who bore you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

Luke 15:18,19 "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants."

Luke 15:20 But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:32 [*the son*] "was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

QUESTIONS:

1. Have your parents ever told you what some of your first words were? If you have kids of your own, what was their first word?
2. Can you think of an example of how we don't tend to like it when something known / familiar gets messed with?
3. Are there any stereotypical human characteristics (good or bad) you grew up associating with God as Father?
4. Jesus used the conversational Aramaic word 'Abba' in the phrase translated 'Our Father.' There were many layers of significance in this word that were shared Sunday (no sacred prayer language, access to God not limited to cultural/ethnic 'insiders', translatability of God's message across language barriers, Abba conveys affection, approachability, intimacy, dependence and admiration based on a trusted relationship, etc etc) Which one(s) stood out to you?
5. Read the Genesis verse above. What is one trait we tend to associate with males that we see in God the Father? What about one traditionally associated with females?

Read the verses in Luke above from the story of the prodigal son and review that story as much as you'd like. We often read this story as if it's primarily about the son, but Jesus uses it to radically re-define God as Father. Through this illustration, Jesus used a norm-breaking picture for everything His culture would have expected from a Father.

6. Specific to verse 20, what are some of the characteristics or expressions of the Father that surprise you when thinking about them in reference to God?
7. Read the following quote from Henri Nouwen and share your thoughts: "All boundaries of patriarchal behavior are broken through. This is not the picture of some remarkable father. This is the portrait of God Himself, whose goodness, love, forgiveness, care and compassion have no limits at all. Jesus presents God's generosity by using all the imagery His culture provides, while at the same time transforming it."

Application: What are some ways you can deepen, strengthen or repair your relationship with God the Father in light of what's been talked about?