

- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR US TO CALL GOD OUR FATHER?**

One of the most well-known statements of the Christian faith is the Lord’s Prayer, which begins with the words “Our Father which art in heaven.” This is part of the universal treasury of Christendom. When I hear Christians in a private gathering praying individually, almost every single person begins their prayer by addressing God as Father. There’s nothing more common among us than to address God as our Father. ...

A few years ago, a German scholar was doing research in New Testament literature and discovered that in the entire history of Judaism—in all existing books of the Old Testament and all existing books of extra-biblical Jewish writings dating from the beginning of Judaism until the tenth century A.D. in Italy—there is not a single reference of a Jewish person addressing God directly in the first person as Father.

There were appropriate forms of address that were used by Jewish people in the Old Testament, and the children were trained to address God in proper phrases of respect. All these titles were memorized, and the term Father was not among them. The first Jewish rabbi to call God “Father” directly was Jesus of Nazareth. It was a radical departure from tradition, and in fact, in every recorded prayer we have from the lips of Jesus save one, he calls God “Father.” It was for that reason that many of Jesus’ enemies sought to destroy him; he assumed to have this intimate, personal

relationship with the sovereign God of heaven and the creator of all things, and he dared to speak in such intimate terms with God. What’s even more radical is that Jesus says to his people, “When you pray, you say, ‘Our Father.’” He has given to us the right and privilege to come into the presence of the majesty of God and address him as Father because indeed he is our Father. He has adopted us into his family and made us coheirs with his only begotten Son (Romans 8:17). [© 1996 by R.C. Sproul. Used by permission of Tyndale. All rights reserved.]

- **FATHERHOOD OF GOD**

Throughout the Bible we find God portrayed as a Father. This portrayal, however, is surprisingly rare in the Old Testament. ...

This metaphor for God may have been avoided in the Old Testament due to its frequent use in the ancient Near East where it was used in various fertility religions and carried heavy sexual overtones. The avoidance of this description for God can still be found in the intertestamental literature.

\*\*\*The teaching of the Fatherhood of God takes a decided turn with Jesus, for “Father” was his favorite term for addressing God. It appears on his lips some sixty-five times in the Synoptic Gospels and over one hundred times in John. ... The uniqueness of Jesus’ teaching on this subject is evident for

several reasons. For one, the rarity of this designation for God is striking. There is no evidence in pre-Christian Jewish literature that Jews addressed God as “Abba.” A second unique feature about Jesus’ use of Abba as a designation for God involves the intimacy of the term. Abba was a term little children used when they addressed their fathers. At one time it was thought that since children used this term to address their fathers the nearest equivalent would be the English term “Daddy.” More recently, however, it has been pointed out that Abba was a term not only that small children used to address their fathers; it was also a term that older children and adults used. As a result it is best to understand Abba as the equivalent of “Father” rather than “Daddy.”

A third unique feature of Jesus’ teaching concerning the Fatherhood of God is that the frequency of this metaphor is out of all proportion to what we find elsewhere in the Old Testament and other Jewish literature. (Note 165+ times in the four Gospels compared to only 15 times in the entire Old Testament!)

[<https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/fatherhood-of-god.html>]

- **THE “PATERNITY WARD” VERSES ...**

- (Romans 4:14 ESV) For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the **heirs**, faith is null and the promise is void.
- (Romans 8:16–17 ESV) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are **children of God**, and if **children**, then **heirs**—**heirs** of God and

fellow **heirs** with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

- (Galatians 3:29 ESV) And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, **heirs according to promise.**
- (Titus 3:7 ESV) So that being justified by his grace we might become **heirs according to the hope of eternal life.**
- (Hebrews 6:17 ESV) So when God desired to show more convincingly to the **heirs** of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath.
- (Hebrews 11:7 ESV) By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an **heir** of the righteousness that comes by faith.
- (1 Peter 3:7 ESV) Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are **heirs** with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

**“Abba! Father!”**