

# God as Father

by Art Katz

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*Art Katz emphasizes the critical importance of understanding and addressing God as Father to deepen our faith and relationship with Him.*

**Duration:** 42:01

**Scripture:** Proverbs 3:11-12, Matthew 6:9, Matthew 27:46, John 1:18, John 14:6, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 12:6

**Topics:** "Character Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares a personal story about a young Palestinian man who was building his home above his parents' house. The man needed \$2,000 to complete his kitchen before he could marry. The speaker's wife suggested giving him a loan, and the speaker was amazed by the spacious apartment the man showed him. The speaker then discusses the importance of recognizing God the Father as an integral part of the Trinity and warns against extracting the Spirit or the Son from the Father. He emphasizes the significance of understanding and embracing the concept of God the Father in our lives.

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## Transcript

I rarely, if ever, call on God the Father. My prayers are always directly to the Lord. Even though Jesus said that we should pray to the Father in His name, I pray directly to the Lord.

I'm more comfortable with the word Lord than I am with the word Father. Maybe I'm striking a note for yourself. You would think that it's a small matter how we address God.

But thanks to what the Lord has been giving me last night, early this morning, I'm being persuaded that it's a great matter. And that we have suffered appreciable loss by the failure to acknowledge and to call upon God the Father. Our Father, which art in heaven.

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, this is how we answer them. Pray in this way. Our Father.

And when He was resurrected, He said, I'm going to my Father and your Father. So this is more than just a little punctuation. This is at the heart of the mystery of the Godhead.

The Trinity. Father, Son, Holy Spirit. And not the least of the functions of Jesus as Son is to reveal the Father who sent Him.

All that He did, He did through the inspiration of the Father. Never speaking His own words, but that which the Father gave Him. And even at the last, He prayed, Father, if this cup could pass, let it pass, nevertheless at your will.

So Jesus is a remarkable statement of a Son who reveals the Father. But if that's not taken into our deepest consideration, we're missing something so foundational that I have no way even to express or to assess. And it evidently is on the heart of God to correct this deficiency.

Because through Jesus, we've been given the privilege to call upon God the Father. And not just any Father, or just an abstract little term, but a distinctive person who has certain characteristics that saves us from ambiguity and from abstraction. Because if God is an abstraction, the fleshly mind is quick to fill in the God of our own choosing.

We might find ourselves worshiping an idol just by the reference to the word God. So I know someone very close to me in the flesh who is away from the Lord and out of the faith and is under present judgment and justifies his present course and conduct as being pleasing to God. But which God? It's the God who endorses the line that He has chosen for Himself by which He can indulge His lust and destroy His family.

So it's very important that when we use the word God, it's a reference to the God who is God. And to assure that, the Lord wants us to understand God the Father who is the foundation of everything. So I'm going to pray now for some illumination on the basis of things that I've been looking at this morning, early today, for today, that we might receive the benefit.

So Lord, I don't call upon You, Lord. I'm calling upon God the Father. Asking precious God on high for mercy to rectify a terrible deficit, Lord, for myself, many in this room, the church at large, that has disfigured our concept of God.

And Your provision was that we would have a foundational understanding of the Godhead in relationship to Yourself as Father. That Jesus alluded frequently to the Father, but our own references are not as frequent. And when they come, they're rather inadequate and shabby and imaginative rather than accurate.

So we're asking, Lord, to help us in this regard because it affects everything. If we have not a concept of God the Father, what concept do we have of fatherhood itself? And if we have not understood the authority that is inherent in fatherhood, what are we able to recognize when You set it before us in the church? So everything is adversely affected to the degree that we do not have a right reckoning and an understanding that is appropriate to us as Your children. Because how shall we be children in a serious way if we have not understood the Father in a serious way? Everything suffers loss.

Not only the recognition of Yourself, the recognition of ourselves declines in proportion to the inadequate understanding of Father, which is the pivot of every consideration that makes the faith the faith and by which we can call ourselves Christian. So, Lord, it's going to take a grace from God the Father because many of us have suffered loss. Either we have grown up without fathers and therefore the concept of God the Father was something that we could not lay hold.

Or we had fathers who were derelict either in their neglect or their abuse and have given us a terrible slant and a prejudicial attitude about the word Father itself that we're not comfortable in invoking that word in reference to You. Somehow our own human experience has colored the way in which we have perceived

You. And maybe the reason we've had derelict fathers, those who did not set forth the genius of fatherhood from the great prototype of the God who is in heaven is because they themselves were not instructed.

And therefore, generation to generation suffers loss and we communicate to our children in a way that is less than what ought to be communicated as fathers. So, this is a weighty matter and will require a remarkable grace to attend and we ask that now in Yeshua's holy name. Amen.

The Father chastens those whom He loves and that this is very love and for the want of that chastening we have many derelict sons today or children that are unwise or unruly and may be expressing, as I've shared many times in here, this place, the rebellion of the children of our generation may be an organic cry for the want of fatherhood that chastens because chastening is painful and only a father's love will enable it to be expressed. A father who does not love his children will shrink from chastening because it hurts him to inflict it. But the thing that distinguishes Father God is that He does not hold back.

He bears the pain but He performs it. And where do we see that on the grander scale? Where do we see the chastening of God the Father toward a son on the greater scale? Huh? The cross. The crucifixion of Jesus was the father chastening the son who knew no sin but became sin for our sake that we who knew no righteousness might become righteous.

There was a chastening that was required and the son bore that penalty freely and voluntarily but the father did not withhold it as anyone who has contemplated the cross knows. Jesus bore it in full and even as a son, what shall I say, trembled in the garden of Gethsemane knowing what it was going to mean. Not only the physical torture, brutal though it was, but the denial of the presence of the father.

The exquisite and final mark of that chastening was the absence of the sense of the father at the most critical crisis moment when a son who has long eternally lived with that presence has at that moment to forsake it. Because one of the things we're going to be taking up in the days ahead, you guys will regret that you're not here, is the pre-incarnate life of Christ. Few have considered the history of Jesus before his history.

Before his human advent, where was he? And what was he doing and with whom was he? Jesus had a relationship with the father since time immemorial, eternally. He lived and basked in that presence. It was his chief delight.

He forsook and left that to come to the earth retaining that presence with him in proportion but at the cross it was removed. And therefore the great cry, my God, my God. He might have said, my father, my father, why hast thou forsaken me? So that was the chastening that Jesus had to bear and that the father did not withhold.

And we have a whole generation of unruly and wild unmanageable children and sons who are organically registering their lack of love most profoundly expressed through chastening by going off into forms of rebellion to actually humiliate the father by punctuating their skin with earrings and tattoos and every kind of grotesque thing letting their hair grow long or wild and everything that they know will discomfort the father because he has failed them to express deepest love through chastening. Got the idea? This prototype of God the father is critical. It's not a little luxury, it's not an icing on the cake as we so often say, it's the cake itself.

If we miss God the father, how do we understand the son? How do we understand ourselves as sons if we miss God the father? How do we understand authority? The precious thing about the fatherhood of God is not only providing the prototype by which fatherhood can be modeled but also the grace to be it. It takes grace to be a father and it's my most conspicuous failure, naturally speaking as the present condition of my sons testify and yet ironically, as I travel the world I'm continually acquiring sons spiritual sons and it's clear that it's the Lord who's establishing that relationship and that requirement so I have no natural qualification to be what the Lord is calling for but praise God that there's a prototype of the father in heaven and a grace from that father to be that in the earth because as Paul said, we have many teachers but we have few fathers.

When he was nailed to that cross on the ground and that cross was lifted up, an ivy lifted up and set into its hole there was a, in that socket there was a, what's the word a sound like a shot heard around the world the weight of that body hanging suspended on those nails and when that thing went into its socket every nerve and tendon and muscle and joint and bone felt the shock of that thing coming into the earth so I would say he was broken not literally but metaphorically and actuality in pain and suffering in every joint, that cadaver was a mass of brokenness inflicted even as the cross itself was set in its orbit so there are many ways to consider that but he's the epitome of brokenness and therefore that's at the heart of sonship he made himself a voluntary candidate to experience

that in obedience to the father which was not academic or antiseptic but out of the love of the father because the activity of the son glorified the father and so we read that to him every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus the Christ Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the father so we need to have this inserted that our every action our every service and conduct has as its ultimate consideration the glory of God the father that's how it was for Jesus unto death at the cross and that's how it must be for us also but if the father is only an abstraction if it's only a word that has no palpable meaning no cogent image that is true what kind of glory can be rendered and what kind of sacrifice and service can be performed if it's not to the glory of God the father in a

way that is really relative to our cognizance of God as father you've got to listen to this this is unrehearsed, this is just coming out I'm being instructed out of my own mouth but you need to hear so are you persuaded thus far that the concept of God the father is no small thing I hope to quote from this book either today or in some future days I just happened to stumble upon it in my bookcase, The Forgotten Father by an English theologian who was one of the leaders of the British charismatic movement and even then when this book was written he was sensing already certain unhappy aspects of charismatica that were the result of the absence of this consideration of God the father and that had extracted the spirit of God that independent of the rest of the triune Godhead which was always a

danger to celebrate the spirit as an independent entity and he says the evangelicals or fundamentalists are equally as guilty in celebrating the son independent of the father so you must not allow the father to be extracted as some kind of invisible hidden entity that is behind the scenes and that somehow the emphasis is on the son or the spirit or you will have a disfigured view of God and a disfigured Christianity you will not be able to submit to authority and I'm not talking about a grim submission but a joyous submission because you've lost the initial connection with the issue of authority itself that resides in the father which is what Jesus demonstrated in his continual obediences both in word and in deed I can't even begin to measure the heartache and problems that we have had to

experience in the history of this little community just over the issue of authority not that we're heavy handed but there are believers who have come to us that have been so disfigured by their own earthly experiences or religious experiences that they're unable to recognize and submit to the measure of authority that is becoming to them here in this place and we've had to struggle through their misconception because they simply cannot relate to authority because they have never settled the issue nor known it at its foundation with God the father so it's a very great matter and we have been praying to God we just finished a three day time of fasting and prayer for these days this is the first Sunday morning after that time of consecration in which our continual plea to God was Lord lay

the foundations set before us my God those absolute and foundational things that have suffered neglect or indifference we don't want to go on to lofty end time considerations and lack the very foundations which are needful and I can't believe or think of anything more foundational than the subject that is now being set before you so many of us have an unconscious way of relegating the father to the dustbin that he somehow set everything in motion this is like the deists and set the clock ticking and then absence himself the hidden God and that the action is carried on now by the son and the spirit and God the father is only an afterthought as if he is not the central and foremost thought well all of these considerations came with this book which I again took off my bookshelf in looking

for some other subject and read up on it and then the book lay on the bed and I don't know at what point I just began to thumb through it and there's an entire chapter on fathers and children more than a chapter and that's how I got into it the author is Karl Barth and it's on a section called the foundations of the Christian life and what does he take up as the first question the children and their father why? because we cannot be proper children unless there is a proper recognition and acknowledgement of the father if we are not serious about the father and have a reckoning and understanding of the father that's reverential and respectful and appreciative what kind of children we will then become we will become unruly in the spiritual house as the earthly children are in the world so

let me read what he wants us to consider if we are to seriously perceive ourselves as children of the father father God is this independently of the attitude of disposition with which other beings encounter or do not encounter him God is the father whether or not beings understand or encounter him or do not encounter him he is it absolutely for them and in no sense through them God is the father as an absolute as a given that is resident in reality he is it essentially in all his inner and outer glory and he acts and speaks as such this explains the need for thought and speech about him that can seriously truly and finally take place only in this vocative vocalization the word father that can consist only of calling upon him as father until we call upon him as father until we can employ

that word with meaning and reality pertaining to that center of the Godhead then what else can be in right place and relationship it waits on this that's why when Jesus taught the disciples to pray the very beginning of the Lord's prayer is our father until you begin with that there is no beginning and if the word father is an abstraction or is uncomfortable in coming from your lips as it has been for me because the word father had no coherence and no expression in my own natural life growing up without one then everything else will suffer loss that's the beginning, that's the foundation it's God the father to begin with the word father in true recognition of to whom that word pertains it's not an abstract word and it's not pertaining to an abstract God it's a God who is and ever and

always was the great creator the source of everything and he desires that he should be addressed as father but he should be addressed with meaning with a comprehension that when we speak that word

there's an image that rises up in conjunction with it that is true and befitting and appropriate to him who desires to be known as and called upon as father it's no more possible than saying that Jesus is Lord accepted by the spirit and accepted by the reality to which we are brought in the wonderful sanctifying work of God but this much we ought to understand we need to come to it if we have not come to it, we need to come to it God desires that we come to it and when we can say Abba with affection and esteem that it conjures up a sense of something that is not imagined but real we have come to

a very great place and in fact can we be children, can we be sons until we can say that maybe one of the things that hinders the reality is our premature vocalizing of it before the Lord himself has made it real so we need to guard our mouths and desire the real thing desire the reality, the foundational reality of God as father and in such a way that he's a father who's dear a father for whom we have an affection the Lord has revealed him in aspects of his fatherliness that we would not have seen if the Lord had not sent his son and when we say father, something wells up in us of a recognition and an affection and a worship appropriate to him until that time we need to hold back a premature expression of Abba so that we wait for that when the Abba comes it comes in spirit and in truth

for the father is seeking those look at this, for the father not the Lord, the father is seeking those who will worship him in spirit and in truth so what kind of worship have we been invoking and emitting until we have come to this kind of recognition it's clear that our worship is wanting an exact proportion to the lack of this foundational reality and God is addressing it now so listen to Karl Barth he is it essentially, the father in all his inner and outer glory and he acts and speaks as such this explains the need for thought and speech about him that can seriously, truly and finally take place only in this vocative, only with this spoken word father, that can consist only of calling upon him as father, one thing must be clear and self-evident to those who become and are obedient to

his command that is to Christians that in him they do not have to do with the final reality of a neutral character this saves us from ambiguity about God is that too fancy a word? this saves us from vagary this is specificity itself because until that comes our worship will be ambiguous our worship will be vague our service will be shallow our relationships will be wanting and our submission to his authority on earth through the appointed sources will be wanting we will be rebels in our hearts and in a place of unhappiness until the reality that comes with the word father can truly be spoken God is not just asking us to articulate a word who could not say father but he wants the word spoken with the comprehension of what it designates in truth what it signifies as he is in himself and not

some vague term that we suppose refers to him but is abstract and ambiguous got the idea you guys? abstract and ambiguous Christianity is a dud it's a failure it's a formula for heresy, for apostasy for all of the slipshod things that prevail in Christendom today because maybe the root of it is the failure to know and acknowledge God the father for who and what he is specifically in himself when you speak the word father in him they do not have to do with a final reality of a neutral character whether it be described, conceived or postulated in him they do not have to do with a he that is a mere cipher with more or less the knowledge to an it concealed behind it which is simply a bit of etiquette appended to it more or less with conviction and skill.

God is not an it and he is not a he as abstractions yes he is he God the father but God wants to save us from neutrality, from ambiguity from a shallow concept because if we are shallow there if we are inadequate there where then shall we be real and be true this is the pivot this is the foundation of reality in God the centrality of God the father to whom Jesus said is greater than I and that when Jesus finishes the

totality of his work and brings every kingdom in submission he then turns them over to the father who then will be all in all so in the end the father who sends him receives the full work of the son that he might be all in all because he is all in all or he would not have sent his son got the picture God the father as father in himself has got to be understood has got to

become real for it's God's provision to save us from floundering from having an it rather than a God a he who is just a neutral entity and not the actual father whom Jesus depicted in his every word and gesture and act if you see me you see the father the father invoked by Christians is not just called such when deep down and in truth he is more than an idea or the epitome of fatherhood deep down and truly he is really father he is thus a speaking and hearing subject a subject that acts personally he is more than a powerful and efficacious object he is an object only to the extent that a person can also be an object that is by making himself itself subject an object to others in himself he is not an object whatever may be meant by fatherhood it stands or falls by whether or not it is the

distinction and revelation of the nature of this person the manifestation of his inner and outer glory the whole thing rests or falls on what he is in himself as father and not by whether the person is simply the personification it is not an abstraction that fatherhood is some kind of symbol or a term that refers to certain abstract qualities there is a living person and entity who is the father and God does not want us playing about with an abstraction of a neutral kind that is a he or a nit when he desires to be known for what he is in himself as a distinct aspect of the Godhead, the foundation of the Godhead, father, the father who sends so by the speaking of the word father Christians are empowered and required to think and utter and live out as evocative with no conditions or

reservations it is invocation of the self acting subject father and only thus is it invocation of God well just to put this in everyday English only when the word is spoken with comprehension and reality that requires a revelation by which the father becomes cognizant and is an object of affection as well as obedience have we come to that reality and that is our privilege to speak the word our father which art in heaven and I remember one remarkable episode of my 41 years in the faith on the west bank in Israel when we came to a orphanage Palestinian Christians and they were looking at me with great suspicion as a Jewish believer, my first time with them and there were the kids of the orphanage assembled and their guardians were standing up around the wall of the room with their arms

folded over their chest suspicious of anything that would come from a Jew, even a Jew who is a Christian and I'm looking to the Lord what do I say in a situation like this I can't begin to tell you what's at stake because if the Lord had failed in that moment my wife would not now be involved as she has been all those years since with that very orphanage and those young kids who have grown up now to manhood to which she has given herself in great involvement and sacrifice that they should have college education that they should have vocational training that they should have this or that she herself did not know what was resting on that moment a crisis moment that had come in a hostile environment and men, Palestinian Christians looking upon a Jew suspiciously and rightfully because what

had they known from Israeli and from Jews but oppression, opposition, mistreatment harshness, so who is this guy so what does the Lord give as a message when a whole future is at stake and is now presently being propounded that had it's origin in that moment and waited on a word that only God could give and the last episode of that relationship came on my own visit to the West Bank and that young man who was then a boy and an orphan is now in his 20's and waiting to marry and has since married and has become a father but what was holding up the works is that he was building his home above that of his parents that's

the way the Palestinians do they go up rather than out and he had built everything for 7 to 8 years but his kitchen was not yet complete and according to their customs you do

not marry until you can provide a home for the wife to be he needed \$2000 to complete the work and my wife was wondering if I would make him alone so he showed me this remarkable apartment it was so spacious I said how many children are you planning to have a hundred this is more than a young couple would ever need it was spacious tile floors I mean he had poured everything in 7 to 8 years pinching pennies and building himself until he had come to this and so we were about to leave after our visit and I knew that Inga was waiting for this loan so I took out my checkbook and I wrote a check but it was not as a loan but as a gift and as I handed the brother the check the Lord quickened to me and impressed me that this spacious home is not for a hundred children that that couple will

conceive and birth, it's for Israelis it's for Jewish settlers just over the brow of the hill of their community called Abud on the West Bank when the bottom falls out for Jews that this will be a place of flight and immediate safety for those who will be brought there by the Lord and is prepared to receive them and so as I gave him the check I'm saying you have a calling for those Jews over the hill in that Israeli settlement and this is more than just a spacious apartment for yourself he was completely bewildered but the Lord gave that in a moment so this is going to be life and death that goes all the way back to that moment in what's that city on the West Bank?

Ramallah where everything is waiting for the word that's going to come from me that will make or break all of the future relationships of the kind now that not only affects Palestinians will affect Jews. Can you believe that so much hangs on a word? Are you guys following me?

This is the life and the Lord and you don't know what's at stake at any moment because he alone knows the end from the beginning but if he doesn't give the beginning you're a dead duck and everything will collapse and fail if you only speak out of some familiar thing that you know and is tested and you feel will be appropriate it has got to be the word that is given because so much hinges on the future of that word so what word did the Lord give that will one day now affect the actual survival life and death of Israelis who will find an immediate place of refuge on the West Bank by a place raised up by an orphan who has come of age and who has been aided and facilitated and his whole growth, even the job that he holds as a chemist is because Inger paid for his education and we have paid

thousands for their water bill, their electric, their gas range their sinks, their washing machines to keep them going because they cannot find employment what was the word the Lord spoke to these men with their arms folded over their chest looking critically waiting to negate this Jew here was the word our father that was the word it just leaped out of my mouth our father, and I kept saying it our father, I kept raising my voice our father, and I watched their eyes blink what is this Jewish guy saying our father, does he mean that our father God is equally his father and that because he is both our father and his father that we are the children of the same father and in fact brothers, though politically we are at each others throats, but in the faith God is our father and I watched them

become disarmed their arms fell from off their chest to their sides their faces changed their expressions and God won them over because of one word our father so if God can do that with a Jew and Palestinians who are prejudiced against Jews likely because of mistreatment you think he might even do it between other aspects of the body of the church that are not in the place of affectionate trusting relationship there is a profound thing that is foundational that needs to be rectified we do not know God the father we don't

revere him we cannot worship him there is no affectionate regard for him we have either celebrated the Holy Spirit as charismatics or the son as evangelicals and extrapolated them from the greater context of the mystery of the Triune Godhead of whom the father is pivot,

center and all so I want to pray so Lord thank you for the beginning we bless you my God because we sense in this morning the jealous concern of the father not for the honor that is becoming to you although that is surely a great part of it but you know how disfigured we will be in our faith how much we will lose how unable we will be to relate to men in the place of authority how restricted we will be in our own hearts and suspicious and withholding until we have come to a full recognition and a surrender to yourself as father so thank you for this jealousy Lord that has prompted this subject and we ask you to continue until by the hearing faith comes and the call is invoked our father with such coherence such cogency, such true faith that you are blessed to hear it and we are released

to speak it and even that final triumph my God in which we can say Abba Father complete absolute trust, affectionate regard that this is not some tyrant who occupies the ultimate throne of heaven to whom we must give regard because we can't help it but just gratitude that he is who he is and he is benevolent and that his greatest benevolence is his chastisement of sons for where would we be if we had no corrective influence like that if we got away with murder, if we could do everything at will and no one is there to correct us or to challenge us we would not be groomed and we could not be raised as sons except that we experience the chastisement of a father this is the heart of fatherhood and we thank you Lord for the blessedness of it the benevolence of it as only you can bestow it and

where we are wanting as human fathers Lord and as spiritual fathers it can only be corrected as we perceive you in who you are in yourself not abstractly but in truth as our father who is in heaven and we are asking Lord that mercy help us my God to give up our faulty and inadequate notions and just to use the word as a little little expletive that means nothing bring us my God to faith to truth to recognition that when we pray we pray to the father in the Lord's name with real reverence, real respect, real affection thank you Lord, oh help us Lord, correct us my God and release us to be the children of such a father the sons and daughters of such a father not only to the father but to each other because our relationships are wanting for the inability to freely flow out as the children of

the most high who have one father, our father that enables us to be the children and sons of him together thank you Lord, that's not only the Palestinian Christians who need to recognize that, it's all of us so come my God and give us the benefit of the word father bless our speaking of it in truth let us receive all the benefit my God you intend deepen our understanding we thank you and give you praise for touching this foundational thing, what's the purpose we've gone on with other things and have failed here and continue in it Lord until you have established this reality and this truth and receive our gratitude even today for the point of beginning calculated even for those who have come in passing just for this Sunday for God knows they need it we thank you and give you praise in

Jesus name God's people said, Amen

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