

# The Father Heart of God

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Belonging to a global partnership of churches exposes one not only to great examples of how the Kingdom of God is advancing, but also to the deep brokenness of our world. Recently I had the privilege of visiting Jonathan & Tracy King, who lead Crossways Church in East London. As well as the local church, they run a safe house for abandoned and orphaned children and babies. They have had over 100 babies through their care, many of whom have found loving homes and adoptive parents.

The orphan situation is heartbreaking. These precious children often grow up with more than their fair share of issues. Even though they now can have the best of homes and parenting, the trauma of their abandonment can follow and haunt them into adulthood.

In the spiritual, it's exactly the same. You and I have been made for family and to be fathered by God. The father heart of God is that we live in the security of His love, as His children. *'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!'* (1 John 3:1)

But fathering is often where there is a huge gap.

## **The Fathering Problem**

But the challenge of today, and even in the times of the early church, is that many go through life without a father, or experiencing God's fathering! *'Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.'* (1 Cor. 4:15)

In the beginning, each person was made in God's image, embracing both the masculine and the feminine. As we grow up, we too need to experience both aspects to come into healthy maturity.

But fathering is often where there is a huge gap. I'm frequently blown away by how well so many single Christian parents cope. They ensure that even though a dad (or a mom) might not be at home, they have introduced their children to the 'perfect Father' who is always present, faithful, loving and committed.

The fathering problem is actually a spiritual problem.

One ministry that works among UK prisoners thought it would be a good idea for prisoners to deepen contact with their mums, and so when Mother's Day came around, they offered the inmates cards to send to their mothers. Amazingly, there was an almost universal uptake. The prison authorities were so impressed that, on the back of this successful project, they did the same for Father's Day. Not a single card was taken!

The fathering problem is actually a spiritual problem. Satan seeks for us to become fatherless, orphans; to go through our entire lives experiencing the brokenness of living apart from our heavenly Father. When Adam and Eve fell, everything changed in their relationship with the Father. *'And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.'* (Genesis 2:8) Adam and Eve hid from the Father because of their sin and shame, and the entire world has been doing the same ever since. It's not surprising, then, that Jesus tells His disciples as He prepares to return to the Father, *'I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.'* (John 14:18)

The good news is that we don't have to live as orphans any longer.



## **Reconnecting with The Father**

As Jesus ascended into Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit, not only so that we can be empowered for our mission and enabled to walk in holiness, but also to reconnect us in a deep, loving and intimate relationship with the Father. *'For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!''* (Romans 8:15)

The good news is that we don't have to live as orphans any longer. *'But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'* (John 1:12) We can now daily live in the secure relationship of the perfect Father who loves us, cares for and about us, is full of compassion and who provides for all of our needs.