

Title The Heart of the Father
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Some here tonight are here for the first time and others know the form, but there are things we're carrying. Some have the meeting on their mind, making sure things get done right. Where else do you have a meeting where we can get ministers together like this, and then afterwards you can get a tape together and listen to it. I hope we have a conscious of a greater presence. Knowing the Father is the best thing that ever happened in my life. Read Jeremiah 29:23-24.

Who is the Father? A.W. Tozer: "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us. Worship is pure or base as the worshiper entertains high or low thoughts of God. Were we able to extract from any man an answer to the question, we might predict with certainty the spiritual future of that man. Were we able to know what our most influential preachers think about God, we might be able to tell where the church will stand tomorrow. The weightiest word in any language is its word for God." Who is the Father? In answering this question, we don't begin with ourselves.

From Scott McKnight in the latest edition of Christianity Today: *On the opening day of my Jesus class, I give a test about Jesus. Does he go his own way? Is he a worrier? The second part asks the same questions of the students. If given to enough people, we all think Jesus is like us. We learn something of God by observing Creation. We see God's imprint all over Creation, but nature can never teach us about the father. It is the Bible that tells us everything we need to know about God. Are we together that this Word is without error? Raise Bibles if you believe it is without error.*

In Genesis, the assumption is "God is." Man prefers to understand and control. God has no beginning or ending, nor an equal. He's all powerful. He is God, fully self-sufficient and self-dependent. Though a stranger to many, yet none are a stranger to him.

God does not discover anything and does not become wiser, more mature, more experienced, or older. As man seeks to understand, God's already been there.

Such a being is a threat, and we can understand why some people want to shake a fist at him out of a terror-stricken heart. Some of us who are old enough to remember were worried about a computer in Belgium that is collecting information about everyone. But Big Brother doesn't

compare to the Father who knows what you're thinking and what's in your heart. If there were someone like him, he wouldn't be God.

Isaiah 43:10-11. Deuteronomy 4:39.

From our perspective, we are in a conflict, there is a warfare going on between good and evil. "Though there is a conflict, there is no real competition." [Unattributed] One was created, one was the Creator. One rules for a time, the other rules for eternity. Satan is just a small blip on the screen of eternity.

Let's look closer at the Father's heart.

He's a personal father, and it is abundantly clear in Scripture it comes from one who enjoys our attention. Not just an impersonal designer or mere influence, and not well described as the man upstairs. He experiences emotions and a great desire for us. Note again these qualities in the Scripture I read at the beginning. Loving kindness. One verse can say he's merciful and another he's faithful, but I hope we can all give an expression of what the Living Word says, that he's faithful. There are no negatives of knowing God. No unpleasant side effects, like medicine.

Now we shall focus on his obvious attention to man. There was an intimate way Adam and Eve were created. 'Form' refers to fashion or frame. He formed him with His hands. I don't know how his hands are. Then it says he breathed into his nostrils. It could have been possible for God to stand 1,000 miles away and breathe into his nostrils, but I doubt that's how it was. I think it was close and intimate. Then the interest in providing a companion for Adam, togetherness. There was something special in mind for Adam and Eve above his creation.

When God called Moses at the bush, he did not say "Hey you!" but by his name, Moses, Moses. [Then followed several verses of God using the name of people: Moses, Saul, Mary, Zaccheus, the stars called by name.] How many stars are there in the universe? It's unknown. Some range from 200 billion to 3^{16} . NASA says over a zillion. We are worth more than the stars, giving us attention even before we were born.

A Sunday morning, March 2, 1964, I reached into a cupboard or a book case, looking for something to read, and I found a Gospel tract. "Religious but Lost," written by John R. Rice. I began to hear a call. It's not good enough to be good. I was trying to be good and take care of things like filthy jokes on the school bus ride home. Here, I was reading I need something more. That night, as I went to my bed, I knelt down and asked the Lord to save my soul. I didn't talk with anyone, and the next night I did the same thing. No one taught me a formula. I just knew I needed to do it. The Lord gave me peace inside after that second night. Later that week, I told my mom I was saved. I think she was a bit surprised. The written Word became alive. I didn't know the Spirit was drawing me, but I thank him that He was. Even as we are together, God bless you brothers and sisters, and we have so many things to give attention to, I wonder how these meetings would be impacted if everyone took deliberate time to make contact with the living God. I'm not on my regular schedule; I can't take my prayer walk along the river. People want to talk when you go home. It's not normal, and it's harder for me to keep up that connection, but I encourage you and myself to do that during this time.

The first Scripture said “Let him that glory, glory in this, that he knoweth me.”

Psalm 86, the things that follow hereafter in this topic, and as I talk about God’s desire for us, that this connection takes place only when we bow to him, only when we submit. Reading now in Psalm 86:8-10. There’s no God like our God, His greatness and also character. Neither are there other works like Thy works. Space, the speed of light. Crossing the Milky Way galaxy would take 100,000 light years. “The Stranger on the Road to Emmaus.” If you want an impression of this, visit the Creation Museum. Revelation 7:9-10. I’m saying here tonight, the word of God saves souls all over the world; there isn’t a culture it is not able to touch.

Turning now to another glorious Scripture, Philippians 2:9, speaking of Jesus. “At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow...” What a passage of Scripture! God highly exalted Him, a name above, an actual position, not just a name. When it talks about others bow, the lesser bows to the greater, of things in Heaven, those who have died, things on the earth and under the earth. Every knee, every knee. Not one is going to be stiff. That means, all the saved. It means, all the unsaved. It means, the Muslims. It means, even Mohammad himself, think of it. The rich, the powerful, men like Karl Marx, Adolph Hitler, Charles Darwin, Michael Jackson, the martyrs, the persecutors, the physically handicapped, the angels, Gabriel, Michael, Lucifer himself, Lucifer bowing to Jesus. Every tongue confess. On that day, the reality of who Jesus is will be known. Everyone is going to bow instinctively. The one we’re talking about tonight is my Lord and hero. All resistance is now passed, though not all will be saved.

Lastly, I’d like to look at one aspect of his design. As I read the Scriptures, a message comes through that he is interested in togetherness, now and forever. Revelation 4:11. We were created from the start for fellowship with God, we were created for togetherness. He is the master and we are the servant.

God is a lover, an intense lover. He saw Adam, Where art thou? He grieved over his wayward children. Enoch walked with God. Elijah is the ‘man of God.’ There are parallels in the NT of his desire for relationship and husband-wife. Isn’t it something? I hope there is still some intensity in your marriage, I hope so. [“Amen” from man in back, chuckle from audience.] This relationship is what it ought to be with me. We’re privileged to be joint heirs with Christ.

Now, I want you to meditate on these Scriptures as I read them.

John 14:3

Same chapter: “And I will pray the Father, and he will give you a comforter...”

Same chapter: “If a man loves me, he will keep my words...”

I know we have the infilling of the Holy Spirit, but here, we get the whole package of the Trinity according to this.

John 17:24

Revelation 3:20-21 “Behold I stand at the door and knock...”

Matthew 28:19-20 “Go ye therefore...”

1 Thessalonians 4:17 “Then we that are alive and remain...”

Revelation 21 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth...”

You understand what I mean? It's the heart desire of the Father for togetherness with us.

For the present

“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” He’s not out there in some corner, not out in the kitchen. Jesus just can’t stay away. That’s the Father we serve. So, my brothers and sisters, what a tremendous privilege is ours tonight, a servant. Whatever may have been in your heart, the desire in his heart is greater than ours.