

Abba Daddy Do

exploration s in child like faith

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Introduction

“*Abba Daddy Do!*” It’s kind of fun to say, but what does this mean? No, it’s not the phrase Fred Flintstone yells at the end of every workday as he slides down the dinosaur’s tail in *The Flintstones*. I do, however, have many fond childhood memories of watching Saturday morning cartoons with my dad. Saturday mornings were a special time.

And “Abba” has nothing to do with ABBA, the super-popular Swedish pop group. To be honest, I’m not a fan at all – sorry. In fact, when *Dancing Queen* is played during wedding receptions, I usually leave the dance floor. That is, if I’m even on the dance floor to begin with...

“Abba” is the Hebrew word for “Daddy.” It’s a more playful and intimate word for Father. It’s the root word of the name of the great Hebrew Patriarch Abraham, whose name roughly translates to “Big Daddy.” God promised Abram that he would be a father of many, many people – as many as there are stars in the sky (Genesis 15:4-6) and grains of sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17), and part of His promise involved a name change to “Big Daddy” (Genesis 17:1-8). And boy – did God keep His promise, as He always does!

Jesus Himself uses the word “Abba” in a prayer in Mark 14:36. But this isn’t just any prayer – it’s one of His last prayers on earth. He’s in the Garden of Gethsemane before His arrest and crucifixion. In this prayer, He is asking God for a “Plan B” because “Plan A” involves going through the brutal torture of the cross, and He’d prefer not to. He’d love a Plan B – but there isn’t one. So He fulfills Plan A, because

of His incredible love for you and for me. It's perhaps one of the most important prayers of Jesus' life – and our eternal life – and He chose to use the word “Abba.”

St. Paul also uses the word “Abba” in the book of Romans and the book of Galatians (8:15 and 4:6, respectively). Both passages show the intimacy God desires to have with His people. God is love – Abba is love!

Now, “Daddy Do” was the first complete sentence my oldest daughter Maile ever uttered... and she still says it frequently. Sometimes I do it – whatever “it” is – and sometimes I don't. Instead, I sometimes strive to: allow, convince, encourage, motivate, inspire, demand or force her to do it. How else will she grow? We learn the most by doing – not by having it done for us.

But “Daddy Do” is also about the idea that our heavenly Father did “it” for us. He created us. He sent His one and only Son Jesus to live the perfect life for us – and to die a brutal death that we deserve. And He rose by His own power to conquer sin. And Jesus sent us the promised Holy Spirit, the power of God who lives in us and works through us. God did it!

This book is NOT a “father knows best” book. Often times it's a “father knows least” book, or at least an “earthly-father knows least” book. Sure, I might be able to get a little fatherly wisdom in there every now and then, but mostly it's about how and what I learn about life and faith from the “child-ness” of my daughters. If you're looking for a book where the father's a hero, put this book down. I'm just along for the adventure. But what is the adventure?

In the first three books of the New Testament, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus tells us about childlike faith. He says that to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must become like a little child. In Matthew 18, the disciples ask Jesus who's the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (I'm sure each one of them secretly hoped that Jesus was going to say they were.) Jesus tells them, and all of us, that the greatest is the one who takes a position like a little child (Matthew 18:4). In John 3 (the same chapter that gives us John 3:16 – the “gospel in a nutshell”) Jesus is having a conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a Pharisee and respected as one of the wisest men in all of Israel. He too is asking about the kingdom of heaven and how one can receive it, and Jesus tells him that to inherit the kingdom of God he must be “born again.” He must become like the littlest of children. This childlike faith concept comes up again and again in the ministry of Jesus.

That's what this book is about – the adventure of childlike faith – looking at the world with childlike eyes and experiencing Jesus with childlike love and trust. For a child, everything's new and exciting, everything's magical, full of mystery and wonder. Things can be big and scary – but through it all, childlike faith knows that Abba Daddy is there. Fathers are so important.

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And as a father, let me introduce my family...

First and foremost, there is Christy, a.k.a., “Mommy.” We got married June 20th, 1998, in Las Vegas. (It was in a church – and, no, Elvis was not my best man!) She is truly the love of my life and my best friend. We have been in ministry together our entire relationship, which means our life is in the “fishbowl” – everybody's watching. In fact, I proposed to her

Pray Like a Child



Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

I love listening to my children pray. It's beautiful. It's simple. It's straight from their little hearts. Christy and I have intentionally not taught them any memorized or recited prayers. It's not that there's anything wrong with those types of prayers, but we want our kids to talk to God just as they would talk to us – in a personal, spontaneous, intimate way. We want our girls to feel comfortable spilling their hearts, minds, and souls to their heavenly Father, without feeling that it's necessary to follow a particular formula or recitation.

But what's funny is that every single night, both of our girls choose to start their prayers with the same specific phrase: *"Dear Jesus, thank You for this wonderful day!"*

Now, don't get me wrong. That's a great way to start your prayers! But is *every* single day really a "wonderful day?"

Some days really *are* wonderful. Sometimes we spend the entire day at Disneyland, followed by dinner at Chuck E. Cheese's, and then we top it all off with a huge ice cream sundae. Now, those are *truly* wonderful days!

But some days are not so wonderful. Sometimes the girls spend most of the day in their rooms by themselves – grounded for fighting, not listening, lying, arguing, or misbehaving.

Sometimes a day is difficult and painful, such as when a relative or friend dies, or when the girls both wake up sick, throwing up from the stomach flu. Even when our own sin isn't to blame for our bad days, we still live in a sinful world – and there will always be sickness, death, setbacks, and disappointments. Unfortunately, not-so-wonderful days do occur.

And yet, whether it's a Disneyland day, a "grounded" day, or a stomach flu day, the girls still offer up the same prayer: *"Dear Jesus, thank You for this wonderful day!"*

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In 1 Thessalonians 5, we're told to "**rejoice always**" (verse 16) and to "**give thanks in all circumstances**" (verse 18). Now, we all know that it's very easy to rejoice and give thanks at Disneyland, but it's much more difficult on the days when we are hurting, disappointed, sick, or grieving. What we need to appreciate is that true joy and thanksgiving do not come out of external circumstances. Gratitude comes from a realization of the inner workings of Jesus. No matter what happens, Jesus still loves us. When we can see Jesus at work in ALL circumstances – in the happy times and in the difficult times – then we can honestly pray: "Dear Jesus, thank You for this wonderful day!"

Pray about It

Dear Jesus,

Thank You for this wonderful day! Your grace is eternal and Your love is abundant in every single day. Forgive me when I can't always see that goodness, especially when times are hard and my heart is hurting, and I seem ungrateful for what You've provided. Help me to give thanks in *all* circumstances. Thank You for making even the most difficult days a blessing because You love me! I pray this in Your name, Amen.

Talk about It

- Prayer is such a pure and simple act. Yet, how often do we think of it as something that should take place at certain times or in certain places, or something that we need to recite in a certain way. What are some of the things that are holding you back from praying more spontaneously?
- In Psalm 51, David cries out for a pure heart. What does it mean to pray with your heart? Do you ever pray with your mind rather than with your heart?

Live It Out

During the next week, try starting all of your prayers by thanking God for the wonderful day He has given you. Focus on the blessings He has given you even in the midst of the most difficult circumstances you face this week.