

The Teachings of Jesus

Our Loving Heavenly Father

Lesson #1 for July 5, 2014

Scriptures: Matthew 7:9-11; John 14:8-10; 16:25-27; Luke 15:11-24; Matthew 6:25-34; Hebrews 9:14.

1. With this lesson we begin a new series entitled, *The Teachings of Jesus*. In these lessons we will try to bring together the teachings of Jesus on different subjects at different times to understand more fully what He wanted to teach us.
2. In this first lesson, we are going to seek to understand what Jesus taught about His Father. Even through the prophets of the Old Testament, God was sometimes addressed by the familiar name, Father. (Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4,19; Psalm 103:13) However, the most common expression used to describe God in the Old Testament was the personal name, *Yahweh*. That name occurs in the Old Testament more than 6800 times.
3. So, how do we get to know God? The first thing we need to recognize is that—and this may be surprising to some—Jesus Himself was the God of the Old Testament. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; John 5:39; Luke 24:25-27,44) So, if Jesus—Christ—was the God of the Old Testament, how do we know when He was speaking about the One we call the Father? Clearly, when Jesus was here on this earth as the human Jesus, He spoke frequently about the Father. Especially in John 17, He spoke of the intimate relationship that He had with the Father which He said is the kind of relationship He wants us to have with both of Them.
4. So, we are faced with the tough challenge of finding ways of relating to and getting to know a friendly God that we cannot see or hear or touch. Does that mean that an intellectual or theoretical knowledge about God—like something we might learn from a dictionary or a theological treatise—is adequate? Not at all! God is asking us to develop a personal and intimate relationship with Him. How is that possible?
5. What evidence do we have that God really loves us? What kinds of things do we need to know about Him? Is it possible to know God the Father through personal experience in the 21st century? Or, can we learn about God the Father only by reading the Bible?
6. There are several things about God that are very difficult for us to comprehend: He is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. While we believe that He wants to have a personal relationship with us, He is also the One in charge of the entire universe. So, what does it mean to say that God is “in heaven” where millions of angel are worshiping Him (Matthew 18:10) when He is also omnipresent? (Psalms 11:4)
7. Read Matthew 7:9-11. Jesus focused our attention on what He wanted to teach us about the Father by suggesting that He is like a good human father. Good human fathers do not give bad or dangerous gifts to their children: No stones for bread, scorpion rather than eggs, or snakes instead of fish. (See also Luke 11:11-12.) But, unfortunately, not everyone living here on this earth has had the privilege of having a loving, caring father. See, for example, *God Is for Real, Man* which is a paraphrase of portions of the Bible in street-smart language including Psalms 23 comparing God to a probation officer. If one has not had such a privilege, how is s/he supposed to relate to a loving, heavenly Father?
8. Since the days of Adam and Eve, no human being has been able to walk, talk, and personally communicate with or even see any Member of the Trinity in Their divine form. (Exodus 33:20) Even so, in His final prayer on this earth, Jesus stated unequivocally that eternal life means to know the Father. (John 17:3) Was Jesus thinking about the words He inspired Jeremiah to write

in Jeremiah 9:23-24? Is it all right to boast about the God we know? Absolutely!

9. In the great controversy as spelled out in Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, we come to understand that Satan and his colleagues have launched an all-out campaign to misrepresent all three Members of the Godhead. Notice these comments taken from various places in the writings of Ellen White regarding what Satan has said about the Father and about the Son: *Early Writings* 218.3-220.0 (revised 1882); *GC* 535; and see #14 below.
10. Since to know God is life everlasting, (John 17:3) Satan is doing his best to keep us from learning and understanding the truth about God! If we succeed in knowing God, Satan is finished! So, how do we explain the apparent contradiction in the following two passages spoken so close to each other by Jesus Himself on the last night before His crucifixion?

John 14:8-9 (*GNB*):⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father; that is all we need."⁹ Jesus answered, "For a long time I have been with you all; yet you do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. Why, then, do you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

John 17:6-8 (*GNB*): [Jesus said in prayer to His Father:] "I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world. . . ."⁸ I gave them the message that you gave me, and they received it; they know that it is true that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me." [Content in brackets is added.]

11. Jesus's response in John 14:8-10 implied something like this: "Is it possible that after walking with Me, hearing My words, seeing My miracles of feeding the crowds, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead, you do not know Me? Is it possible that you do not recognize the Father in the works that He does through Me?" They were still waiting for Him to defeat the Romans!
12. How do we understand those words? Was this the first time the disciples had really asked Jesus about the Father? Surely not! (Compare John 16:25-27.) Hadn't Jesus tried to explain about the Father earlier? What was Jesus trying to tell the disciples about His Father? Look at Ellen White's comments on the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed....In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. *Letter 83*, 1895; *That I May Know Him* 338.4; *21MR* 393.1.

13. Why did the disciples learn and understand so little about God and the truth about the Messiah despite being with Jesus all that time? (Compare Luke 18:31-34.) What were they thinking about? How could the disciples participate with all of Jesus's miracles and teachings and not ask questions about what was behind it all? Jesus even gave them miraculous powers! (Matthew 10:8) From where did they think those powers came? Did they really think that Jesus's goal was just to become an earthly king? Where did they get that idea?
14. What were the prevailing ideas about God in Jesus's day? In that light, what did Jesus come to do?

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and **God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen**

children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. **The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. . . .**

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men.” *The Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890, par. 6,9; contrast *ST* December 4, 1893; *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, 358.3-359.1; *RH* August 14, 1900; *YI* November 21, 1883; *RH*, November 1, 1892 par. 12. [Bold type is added.]

15. Is this what is usually taught about the life and death of Jesus? Do we really believe that the whole purpose of Christ’s mission on this earth was to reveal the truth about God? Or, did He come to “pay the price for sin”? What does it say to us about God when we read in some translations words like these?

Romans 3:25, (*The Living Bible*): For God sent Christ Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to end all God’s anger against us.

How does that fit with John 3:16?

16. In Romans 3:25, the *King James Version* calls Jesus’s death a propitiation. What is a propitiation? Does God’s anger against us really need to be appeased? What does that have to do with love? Could God be angry with us and love us at the same time?
17. Where was the breakdown between these two ideas? We must believe that Jesus did the very best that He and His Father could to communicate; and yet, the disciples did not seem to get the message. What about us today? Do we tend to fear God and His judgment and yet, love our favorite sins? Could we turn that around and learn to love God and fear sin?
18. What is the most important thing Jesus said about His Father? No one needs to plead with the Father on our behalf because the Father loves every one of us. (John 16:25-27) Doesn’t this seem to contradict the whole idea of the priestly ministry described in the Old Testament? God is doing everything possible to win us back. In fact, He gave us the very best gift of heaven, His Son. (John 3:16) It is pagan to say that He needs to be appeased, or propitiated, and even that someone, anyone, needs to plead with Him to forgive us and accept us back. With our immature misunderstandings, we may need to see Jesus pleading with His Father; but, when we grow up and come to know God better, we will realize that pleading with the Father is absolutely not necessary.
19. God’s very essence and the essence of His government is love. (1 John 4:8,16) The very essence of Satan’s government is selfishness. We are all born selfish; that is, as infants and children, we think only of our own needs and wants. Christianity is God’s way of encouraging us to grow up and leave our selfishness behind and adopt God’s plan of love. Think about it. What percentage of your daily activities are basically motivated by selfishness? How often do we do things that are truly loving? When the truth is known, some of our lives look pretty bad!

There is no chapter in our experience too dark for Him to read; there is no perplexity too difficult for Him to unravel. No calamity can befall the least of His children, no anxiety harass the soul, no joy cheer, no sincere prayer escape the lips, of which our heavenly Father is unobservant, or in which He takes no immediate interest. "He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm 147:3. ***The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son.***—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 100. [Bold type and italics are added.]

20. Does that mean that our lives will be easy and comfortable as we seek to live more and more like Jesus?

2 Timothy 3:12 (GNB): Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

21. Do you know anyone who is being persecuted? Is the persecution of Christians by communistic, totalitarian, and atheistic governments a part of the persecutions predicted for the last days? When will that persecution spread to the entire world? (See Revelation 13.)
22. While Satan is doing everything he can to deceive us and confuse us by misrepresenting the Father, Paul made it very clear that all three Members of the Godhead are on our side. (Romans 8:26-27, 31-39) They cooperated in the earthly ministry of Jesus. (Luke 3:21-22; John 14:16-17) With all of Them on our side, do we have anything to fear?

In order to strengthen our confidence in God, Christ teaches us to address Him by a new name, a name entwined with the dearest associations of the human heart. He gives us the privilege of calling the infinite God our Father. This name, spoken to Him and of Him, is a sign of our love and trust toward Him, and a pledge of His regard and relationship to us. Spoken when asking His favor or blessing, it is as music in His ears. That we might not think it presumption to call Him by this name, He has repeated it again and again. He desires us to become familiar with the appellation.

God regards us as His children. He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. Parents love their children, but the love of God is larger, broader, deeper, than human love can possibly be. It is immeasurable.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 141.4-142.1.

As the inspired apostle John beheld the height, the depth, the breadth of the Father's love toward the perishing race, he was filled with adoration and reverence; and, failing to find suitable language in which to express the greatness and tenderness of this love, he called upon the world to behold it. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1. What a value this places upon man!—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 15.

23. Have we comprehended this love? Do we really believe it? Have we experienced it? Are we telling everyone about it? Why? Or, why not?

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