

God Our Father

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God is the central figure in the spiritual lives of all humans who believe there is a God. God is referred to by many different names across a variety of religious sects, but among Christians he is most often referred to as “God the Father.” For many, God is an incomprehensible being without form or substance, immaterial—a pure spiritual essence that created heaven and earth and all that are in it and who was then, is now, and forever will be the sole governor of all that is. He is the prime mover, the alpha and the omega—and he is alone. For others, God is a more personal and approachable being—though he is still all-powerful. This being gave us life, allowed us to enter this mortal realm, and will welcome us home to his heavenly realm (which is our eternal home) when our mortal existence reaches its inevitable end.

Knowing God the Father

Although we may not reach a perfect understanding of God the Father, we must seek to know him. The doctrinal foundation of God the Father can either help or hinder the process of knowing God, and is therefore worthy of our careful study. God as the one supreme-being and creator of all things, the father of Jesus Christ, and the ruler of heaven and earth. God is ascribed the characteristics of love, mercy, charity, truth, power, faith, knowledge, and judgment, having all power, all knowledge, and from whom all good things come (Gospel Principles 9). This mixture of tangible and intangible characteristics does not negate that God is our Heavenly Father; it affirms this truth. God is the Heavenly Father of all men and women

who have ever lived on the earth; all of us are the spiritual sons and daughters of the living God.

Putting God Too Far Out of Reach

There is Christian doctrine among some sects of Christianity that describe God the Father as an omniscient and all powerful being from whom/where everything that is righteous and good comes. There is also doctrine that describes God as a mystery and beyond the understanding of man, laying a foundation of reverence for his majesty and dominion.

We should indeed have reverence and awe for God, however we must also embrace a doctrine that gives God a more intimate nature which reveals a loving Father in Heaven. One must keep in mind that God in the New Testament is referred to by Jesus and Paul as “Abba” (Mark 14:36, Rom. 8:15, and Gal. 4:6), which literally translated means “father,” but a personal form of father approaching a meaning more like “daddy.”

When Christians accept doctrine that makes God a mystery and beyond our comprehension, we put distance between us and God, making it more difficult to know and love God more fully.

Catholic doctrine for instance describes God as without gender (“neither man nor woman”), creating spiritual confusion. In numerous Biblical passages God is referred to as “He” and “Father.” How can one take scripture seriously while holding in one’s mind the image of God without gender? He is our Heavenly Father, a being male in essence, a loving Father to us all.

Paul writes that God is the Father of Spirits (Hebrews 12:9). Turning the word, Father, into pure metaphor; denying the fatherhood of God; and dispensing with humans being created in God’s physical image as a fanciful notion or a mysterious abstraction is simply false doctrine.

The Physical Nature of God

With all mankind being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), it follows that God has some form of the physical characteristics of man: a body of flesh and

bones. However, unlike our bodies, his is glorified, perfected, and beyond our ability to comprehend. For most Christians this is a very shocking and difficult doctrine to comprehend. Instead of allowing this doctrine to overwhelm one must consider the several passages from the Bible that reveal this hidden truth to all, passages that will eventually make perfect sense once the truth is uncovered.

We are in God's Image

There are several scriptures in the Bible that mention our being created in the "image and likeness" of God. Genesis 9:6 refers to "man's blood" and the image of God in the same verse, strongly suggesting a physical likeness between God and man's blood. While some may interpret such scriptures metaphorically, one must consider the possibility of the literal meaning. Most find themselves focusing on the "spirit" nature of God as mentioned in John 4:24: "God is a Spirit..." Humans are likewise a spirit, clothed in flesh and bones in the image and likeness of God. If we are in the likeness of God this means the physical image of God must be similar to that of humans. This consideration begs a profound question: In what form, then, are the "flesh and bones" of God? One need not dispense with the plain language of scripture to imagine a God of infinite power who is also in the form he gave to man. What we don't know are the processes that generate bodily perfection and glorification. This is where the mystery lies, not in the fatherhood of God.

Those Who Have Seen God

The Bible mentions a chosen few who have seen God. For instance, Stephen looked up to Heaven and saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). Joseph Smith saw God the Father and His son Jesus Christ in the sacred grove. Although God has rarely appeared to man, one must consider those scriptural references that clearly imply God having a tangible body as opposed to a being without form. How does Jesus stand on the right hand of nothingness? If we let metaphor take over, we will be left with no God at all.

God Having Shape

Jesus refers to God having "shape" (John 5:37), while Paul refers to Christ in comparison with God when he tells

the Hebrews "...being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). With God being referred to as having shape and "person," one must seriously consider the physical nature of God. Jesus himself said "...he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The prophet Joseph Smith was blessed to have this doctrine revealed to him first hand when he saw the Father and the Son as part of the First Vision.

Conclusion

The ultimate benefit to our spiritual lives from the true Christian doctrine on God the Father is that we will come closer to our Father in Heaven through a more intimate understanding of his character, while maintaining a reverence that is appropriate when praising and praying to the Almighty.

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