

FATHER

Our Father in Heaven... (Matthew 6:9, NIV)

Many people think of God as a king or an emperor – someone we collectively honor, but whom we would not dream of coming close to or get to know on a personal level. Surely Jesus' disciples would not dream of addressing God with such a familiar term as 'Daddy'. Yet, this is precisely what Jesus suggested they do. And he set the example. All four gospels describe moments where Jesus addressed God as father and Mark even includes the Hebrew word he used: "Abba" (Mark 14:36).

By this teaching, Jesus invited his disciples to share in a close relationship with God; to depend on him with the simple trust of a child. He spoke of God as someone who knows and sees us, someone who cares, protects, guides, helps us out when we are stuck, who is infinitely generous and who longs for connection with each of us.

Of course, God has all the power and authority. He is a father who demands our respect and obedience. But this father has no insecurities, no weaknesses, no doubts. He offers us a stable, enduring love that will sustain us wherever we go. And we can ask him any question that we grapple with. That is how He helps us to grow.

We build on our experience of human love to understand what God's love is like and relate to him. Sadly, some of us have such poor experiences of father that we prefer to think of God as a mother. The Bible provides enough evidence for that possibility. After all, it was God who created both fathers and mothers. Sometimes we have to look even further: grandparents, teachers or others who incarnated the love of God for us. God offers us his love even if parents fail (Psalm 27:10).

Prayer: Think of words that describe the ideal father for you. Can you find these characteristics in the Bible? Can you entrust yourself to a God who is like that?