

Knowing God as Father

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Wayform Chapter 2, Knowing God as Father. Spiritual formation is the process of transformation of the inmost dimension of the human being, the heart, the spirit, and the will.

It is being transformed in such a way that its natural expression comes to be the deeds of Christ done in the power of Christ. In other words, over time, spiritual formation makes us act like Jesus naturally, out of habit from the heart.

We spent time looking at Jesus' teaching in Matthew 11, 28, about the easy yoke in chapter 1, which unsurprisingly, as it's an oxen's yoke, involves work.

We saw how the way of the master is life lived with Jesus from the inside out, and we shared this helpful diagram, which you can see in the book. It's six concentric circles with a bullseye in the middle.

In the middle, there is will-heart-spirit, right at the core of a person, and then it moves out to the next circle, which has the mind, and then the emotions, body, social context, and soul, which gives a picture of some of the components of our

personhood involved in transformation. Change happens on the inside and works itself out to the rest of our life. This process is very much connected to the work of the Holy Spirit, this stuff is literally what is meant by walking with the Spirit.

After being challenged and renewed and changed by the Spirit, through obedience, his work takes a hold in our lives. The Spirit can only work because the Son has made it possible through the Gospel.

Jesus lived the perfect life so that he could die the perfect death in our place, to then rise from the dead and return to heaven from where he could send the Spirit.

The Great Commission says to baptize them in the name of not just Jesus and the Spirit, but the Father also. In this chapter, we are going to consider the crucial importance of knowing God as Father, the first member of the Trinity. April 8, 2011.

I had received several unanswered calls from my brother. I was working on the pool filter at home, and it was early afternoon. I had the day off.

It was strange that Murray had been so persistent with his calls. When I phoned him back, he uttered three words which changed my life and turned it upside down. Dad has died.

Dad has died from a massive heart attack, completely unexpected. I was 41 years old and grateful that I had had a wonderful father for that long. Losing my dad impacted me enormously because my dad was the best.

I know unfortunately for many of us this was not the case. It's said that fathers are given unearned admiration from their kids, as are mothers. It's woven into the fabric of our DNA.

Most of us want or wanted the love of our father and to know his affection. We wanted this as soon as we were born and we wanted to give the love back.

If the mention of the word father causes you to feel or experience unwelcome pain, I am really sorry. I don't know how to talk about the father heart of God without going there, without talking about fathers.

The very existence of the pain or the joy associated with our father demonstrates that fathers are pretty important in the relational systems of our humanity.

In this, our second study of spiritual formation, we're going to explore Paul's teaching to the Romans in chapter 8 of his great epistle. We'll discover that core to the formation of our life with God is our understanding of his fatherhood.

And this will cover belief and becoming, belonging and behaving. The Apostle Paul is writing to the church at Rome in the first century. He's writing to an important church, but by all accounts, a relatively small church, probably around 60 people.

Paul has been teaching on the significance of the work of the Spirit built upon the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And then we read in verse 14. For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again, rather the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. Those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God.

John's Gospel says, Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision, or a husband's will, but born of God.

Those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. Believe and become. It's quite common for people to assume we're all God's children.

If you're human, if you're alive, you are God's child. That's not exactly what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches that we have to become a child of God.

Did you notice that the text said, who gets to become a child of God? Those who believe. Later in John 3.16, John explains a little more about the believing part.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For those who believe that Jesus died for them and rose again, this belief transfers them from death to life.

A little earlier in chapter 3 of John's Gospel, Jesus says, very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again. We are talking about what needs to take place to get access to life in Christ as shown in the diagram.

The spirit of a person right there in the middle needs to come alive.

Ephesians 2 says in verse 1, As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are

disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Without belief in Christ and what belief produces, regeneration, we are spiritually dead. Our heart is stony and we have no capacity for free will to obey God as we should. Our spirit, heart and will need to come alive.

This happens in a most mysterious and miraculous way through spiritual new birth by faith. Through belief in the gospel, we become children of God. Paul wrote in Romans 8, For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.

The spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again, rather the spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. Are you born again? Are you made new on the inside?

Is your spirit alive because of the gift of forgiveness and the presence of the Spirit of Christ inside you? Christianity is not coming to church on Sunday. It's not believing that there is a God in heaven.

Romans 10 9 says, If you declare with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. To be saved is to be forgiven and therefore saved from the wrath of God upon our sin.

To be saved is to be adopted as a child of God. The Spirit seals us and says, You are adopted as a child of God. Only a couple who have adopted a child could fully understand what this is like.

One day you don't have a child who is yours and then the next you do. Ephesians 1:13 says, And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

Don't put off expressing your belief in who God is and what he has done for you in Christ. If you'd like to receive Christ as your Saviour, you can. You can become a child of God right now.

To become a child of God, we follow this process in prayer. Firstly, we admit that we are a sinner. Secondly, we believe in the Gospel.

And thirdly, we commit to live under Christ's Lordship. You can pray a prayer like this now. Lord God, I want to own the fact that I have sinned and have not obeyed your perfect commands.

I desperately need saving, and I believe that only you can save me. I believe you sent Jesus to live the life I could never live and to die my death in my place. I am so grateful for your mercy demonstrated to me in giving your son to die for me.

Please forgive me. And come by your Spirit and be the Lord of my life. I want to live for your glory all the days of my life.

The Bible says if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that God raised him from the dead, we will be saved. Not because of anything we will do, but because of what Christ has already done.

If you've prayed that prayer from the heart, you can be confident that God is faithful to his word and will transform you from the inside out. That you are a child of God.

After we believe and become a child of God with a heavenly Father, we need to know that we belong. Number two, belong. By him we cry, Abba Father.

The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Romans 8, verse 15 and 16.

I grew up with a mate who was adopted, and I think it's fair to say that he struggled with knowing that he knew that he knew that he belonged in his family all of his life.

God the Father knows that most of us have an acute sense of our unworthiness to become a child of God. We intrinsically know if God's family is holy and I'm not, then clearly I don't belong.

So God the Father designed things such that the Spirit of God would come inside of us, and from the inside out testify to us, deep, deep within us, you are a child of God. I remember when my wife Leanne was pregnant with our kids.

I used to love putting my face down close to the baby inside of her and talk to let the timbre of my voice with its unique vibrations and tone become known to that precious little unborn child and to tell them truth about who they were and how much

they were loved. Really, it's one of my favorite things to do with my granddaughters. Just be right up close, cheek to cheek, and talk to them about how amazing they are and how much they are loved and how much God loves them.

The Spirit testifies to our spirit. You are a child of God. When I was a teenager, a young woman I knew from church started going out with a non-Christian bloke.

It was my privilege to lead him to Christ, but with quite a worldly background, if I'm honest, I doubted how he could change so much to authentically live a Christian life. A few weeks passed, and one day he came up to me and said, I'm a Christian.

I responded, Yeah, I know. We prayed the other week. But he insisted, No, I mean, I know I am.

He'd been running on the beach when the Spirit of God spoke to him in the deepest part of his being and testified, You are a child of God. From that day forth, he knew he was a child of God.

One John says, See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are. It's amazing when you realize, I really am a child of God.

I belong. I am going to live forever by grace, forever and ever. This is what needs to happen at the start of spiritual formation.

We're not striving to be accepted. We are accepted. We're not putting in effort to pay for our sins.

It's all been done by Jesus for us. And when you receive the testimony of the Spirit to your Spirit, you cry, Abba, Father. Abba is a guttural expression.

It's the utterance of a small child rather than an older one. Abba means dada or papa. The most important part of Abba is that it contains wonder.

When the Spirit teaches us to say Abba, He's teaching us to embrace the dependence a young child has on her father. Absolutely, completely dependent and accepted. Abba.

Like a child saying, horsey, there's wonder. Abba can never be said with boredom. Abba is an expression of joy and expectation, which is pretty cool since Paul is talking about how we can interact with God.

If you're thinking you don't need a father in heaven, you don't need the affirmation of your dad, well, you'd be unusual. Even Jesus needed it.

When he was baptized at the start of his ministry, it's so significant to observe what God, his father, said. Luke 3 verse 21 tells us, When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too.

And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, You are my son whom I love. With you I am well pleased.

Jesus required his father to say, I love you, I'm proud of you, you are good at... Not a bad tip for parenting. I love you, I'm proud of you, you know, you're good at.

As we consider spiritual formation, we must know that we have become a child of God and that we belong in God's family.

For it's out of this rock solid identity that we renew our minds in the truth, experience and regulate our emotions, guide our bodies and experience community, believe and become, belong. And learning the way of the Master, we behave.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs, Paul writes, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. If indeed we share in his sufferings, in order that we may also share in his glory.

Jesus said in John 5, very truly I tell you, the son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees his father doing, because whatever the father does, the son also does. For the father loves the son and shows him all he does.

What a wonderful verse. The son is always about his father's business. He does what he sees his father doing.

Spiritual formation is learning what our heavenly father is up to in the world and joining in. As much as it's so helpful to see ourselves as dependent babies with our father, we're also meant to grow up and take on responsibility in the kingdom.

Babies don't take on the family business. Grown-ups do. What will it look like for us to develop in our spiritual formation with God as Father?

For insight into the answer to this question, you just can't go past the Lord's Prayer and for that matter, the whole sermon on the mount. Think about it.

Jesus says in Matthew 6 verse 5, And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father who is unseen. Then your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. This then is how you should pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Being about the Father's business is to remember and display the Father's character. That is, His name, which is your name.

We live in such a way that we honour the Father's character with the formation of our lives. Hallowed be your name. How we live out the ways of the Master in the kingdom of the heavens can bring honour to the Father's character.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Being a grown up child of God and about the Father's business means we live for the Father's kingdom. We seek it first.

We live for His glory and His name's renown in all the world. We live for the Gospel of the Father's Son to be proclaimed.

We live for the justice and goodness and love of the Father to be expressed through the kingdom come, which we as co-heirs have the keys to. The keys of the kingdom is what we're about. Give us today our daily bread.

We know about the Father's provision and we share it with others. We know every good gift comes from above. We sometimes distribute His provision, other times we receive it.

As kids of the King, sons and daughters of the Most High God, we tell of the Father's forgiveness and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And the Father's guidance lead us not into temptation and the Father's protection, but deliver us from the evil one. Believe and become. Belong and behave.

My dad was an opera singer. He sang for 40 years as a principal singer with the Australian Opera. I grew up going to the opera house and seeing my dad sing on stage.

But the coolest part was being able to go backstage after the show.

We'd come to the front desk at the bottom of the stairs and find our names had been assigned exclusive VIP passes, so the security guard would let us in and we'd walk up the stairs to the green room.

After the green room, you turned right down the narrow aisles towards the dressing rooms. It always felt like we were in a spaceship to me as a young kid.

All of the magnificent costumes everywhere, famous international singers who had just been on stage would be walking past, then we'd come to dad's dressing room and we'd go straight in.

Dad would be taking off his makeup, and then one of the other main stars of the show would come in and we'd get introduced. It was pretty special. And then he'd take us up on stage, and the stage hands would be working, cleaning things up.

Maybe you've got your own story of access to your dad's world, to that special off-limits area that you could enter just because you were his kid. I imagine you know where this is heading.

If you believe in Jesus, you've become a child of God, and you're going to live forever. You now belong in the family. God the Father knows you, and you know him.

You call him Abba Dad. You have 24-7 access to him. You're welcome in the family business.

You have power to do the works of the family business, and you're authorized to do the works of the King of the Kingdom who is your Father in Heaven.

What a privilege it is to be spiritually formed into the likeness of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and name God himself as our Father. Believe, belong, behave, become who you are called to be in Christ.