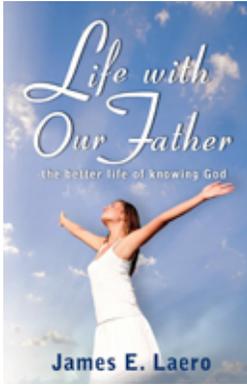
A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless top and a white skirt, stands with her arms raised in a gesture of praise or joy. She is looking upwards against a bright blue sky filled with soft, white clouds. The overall mood is one of hope and spiritual freedom.

Life with Our Father

the better life of knowing God

James E. Laero



Life With Our Father is a glorious revelation of God as He desires us to see Him, and a very practical guide to understanding His ways, His house, and growing up in His life. This book will open your eyes to your heavenly Father's amazing plan for your life, and inspire you to take hold of the better life waiting for you through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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The Better Life of Knowing God

By
James E. Laero

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!)

Ephesians 1:3-5 (the Message)

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Chapter 1

Through His Eyes

Bill hovered over me waving a pair of razor sharp scissors as he talked, “I keep trying to be good. Everything goes OK for a while but then I just seem to slip right back into that stuff again. I’m so tired of trying. It never seems to change. I think God is disgusted with me.” Bill paused and sighed, “I might as well just give up.”

I was getting my monthly haircut when Bill, the hair stylist, made his declaration of defeat. Moments earlier, after telling him I wanted an inch or so off the top, he asked me where I lived and what I did for a living. I never met Bill before that moment, having just popped into the first hair salon I saw on my walk through the local mall. I told him I ministered at a church about thirty miles up the road. Bill went on to tell me his story as a member of a large church and about his frustration trying to find the life he saw in other Christians.

Bill had a big problem, and little of it had to do with his cycle of trying and failing to be good. His problem was not his ability, or lack of ability, to be good. Bill’s problem was his vision. He couldn’t see! No, he wasn’t a blind stylist. But he sure was blind.

As Bill snipped away at my hair I spoke quietly to him about how much he was loved by his heavenly Father and what our part was in response to God’s great gift of life through Jesus Christ. As I shook off the hair clippings I suggested a Bible scripture he might like to read. (As it turned out, another of his customers had given him a modern translation of the Bible just a week earlier.) Bill gave me his business card as I

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left and asked me to stop by again, even if I didn't need a haircut. I never saw Bill again. The salon closed shortly after my visit and Bill disappeared.

Driving home from that divinely arranged haircutting appointment I thought a lot about Bill's frustration and about the very real presence of God's desire to have Bill understand His love. When I spoke to Bill about the heart of God, the Holy Spirit's passion overflowed in me toward him. As strong as Bill's desire was to know God, his heavenly Father's desire to have Bill know Him was much more intense.

This divine desire of God for us to know Him is the foundation of everything our God has done since the fall in the garden, and it is still at the center of His heart to this day. Through thousands of years up to the time of the Cross, He worked and invested to make a way for us to be with Him. And then, as a magnificent climactic gesture of that love, He went as far as the sacrifice of His only Son so that He could regain all of us as sons and daughters. The Apostle Paul wrote of this master plan in his letter to the Ephesians:

How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!)

Ephesians 1:3-5 (the Message)

Everyone has an image of God and what He is all about. This image comes to us from the teachings, experiences and observations we've been exposed to. Some people see God as a provider, others see Him as a protector, or as a distant mystical

The Better Life of Knowing God

supreme being who created the earth and people as a weekend hobby project. And still there are others, like Bill, that see Him as a judge. If you surveyed a hundred people who confessed to be Christians, asking them who God is, what He is like and what He expects of them, you would likely end up with nearly as many different answers.

The way we view our heavenly Father is critical to every part of our life. The images we hold of Him will determine whether we gain or miss the great glory that is available to us now, in this life. God tells us in His Word that, “*According to our faith (in Him) it shall be done unto us.*” To have faith in anyone we must know him or her. We must know their intent and their reliability. The same is true about our faith in our heavenly Father. If we are ever to gain anything from Him we must have faith in Him. To have faith in Him, true faith, we must get to know Him. *Be encouraged, reader! You are already on your way to knowing Him better.*

God was passionate for me to tell Bill that He loved him. And though I did tell him, a thick cloud of hopelessness still hung over him. My simple words of encouragement, though temporarily uplifting to his heart, were not enough. He was not languishing because God had abandoned him; but rather he was buried in a pit of desperation as a result of his own lack of vision. When we fail to see God properly, we end up living in needless cycles of fear and frustration.

My people are being destroyed because they don't know me.

Hosea 4:6a (NLT)

Too often we lose sight of, and more often totally fail to understand, as did Bill, that the greatest desire of this all-powerful God is to be a *Father* to us. Bill was stuck in defeat because of a faulty image of God as being only his executioner.

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Indeed, when Bill looked at God he saw a judge. Then of course, when he looked honestly at his own life, he saw things that needed to be judged. The result for Bill was endless frustration in his daily cycle of measuring out all the good, bad, right, wrong, success and failure of his life in an attempt to feel justified. What an awful way to live. God doesn't want anyone to live such a life of frustration.

Bill's poor *vision* of God left him blind to the true full glorious work of Jesus Christ. Worse yet, no one ever led Bill to the God who is his Father. In his blinded condition, Bill couldn't see the gentleness and patience of his Father's heart. He didn't see that salvation as a spiritual growing-up process much like we grow up in our natural lives. He didn't know about the provision that his heavenly Father had put in the church to help him come to fullness and maturity, and he didn't see the true desire of God's heart, which is now, and always has been, to fellowship with us.

If we fail to understand what really motivates our heavenly Father, we are doomed to a life of frustration and failure. To gain the fullness He desires for us, and return to Him the desire of His own heart, we need only learn to see things through His eyes, to get His perspective.

Your perspective of life can mean the difference between absolute peace and absolute terror. Let me ask you a question. Have you ever been so gripped by fear that it tore through your very soul? I mean the kind of fear that sweeps through you head-to-toe in dreadful waves wondering what might come next. Some two thousand years ago such fear seized the hearts of some very strong men crossing the Sea of Galilee. They survived their fateful journey. Along the way their encounter with the Son of God became forever etched into eternity's record of Christ's amazing miracles. But more important than

The Better Life of Knowing God

the miracle they witnessed was the lesson they learned about their Father's perspective. Their journey is recorded in the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 4. Let's ride along with them for a distance.

"JOHN!! JAMES!! COME OVER HERE!!" shouted Peter.

"What's up?" questioned John, brushing by him on his way to the beach.

Peter replied, "Jesus wants the boats. We are crossing over."

"Now? It is nearly dark!" exclaimed John.

"Yes John. Now," commanded Peter.

John paused to think and answered, "OK. I'll get them ready, but hey Peter?"

Peter halted in the sand, "Yes John?"

"Do you think I can ride with the Master?" asked John with a grin.

"Yes John. Now go get the boats!" Peter replied watching as his young friend bounced away to the older disciples now gathering belongings for the journey.

"Hey James! Did you hear? I get to ride in the Master's boat!" boasted John.

"Who said?" demanded James. "I asked Peter and he said I could." retorted John proudly.

"Wait here," responded James.

"Where are you going?" John shouted off to James already jogging up the beach.

"I'm going to talk to Peter. I want to ride with Jesus too," James shouted over his shoulder back to John.

"PETER!! HEY PETER!!!" called James, now half out of breath.

Life With Our Father

Peter, who was caring for the pre-launch work needed for the lead boat, responded without looking up, “Yes James. What is it?”

“John said that you told him he could ride in the Master’s boat,” James spoke more quietly as he noticed Peter intent on his work.

“Yes James. I did,” Peter responded knowing what was coming next.

“Can I be in His boat too?” asked James. “Yes, I suppose so,” Peter responded without turning his gaze from the work at hand.

“Great!” James half shouted. “Hey did you see all those people listening to the Master teach today? How many do you think were there?” he asked.

Peter half sighed, weary from the long day, “I don’t know, James, a lot.”

“Peter?” James continued, “Those stories he told, about the farmer and the mustard seed, did you understand it all?” James asked quietly.

Peter paused from his work for the first time in their conversation and, looking out over the sea before them, replied, “No, James, not all of it. But I’m sure He will tell us what it means. Can you help your brother John get the boats ready?”

“Yes. I’m going now. Who are you riding with Peter?” asked an excited James.

“I don’t know yet. Maybe with you guys,” smiled Peter.

James raced away up the beach as Peter paused again just briefly to enjoy the zeal of his brother trotting away.

Just then, the Master, still pressed by the crowd, arrived at the shoreline. Peter was amazed. “How could a man go so long without rest?” he whispered to himself. Turning up the shoreline he cried, “*EVERYONE IN THE BOATS! IT’S TIME*

The Better Life of Knowing God

TO GO!” Counting heads quickly he questioned, “Where are Andrew and Phillip?”

“We are here. What is it?” Philip asked just walking in from the other edge of the crowd with Andrew.

“Get Bartholomew and Thomas. Tell them to get into the boats. We are crossing over the lake,” Peter said as he threw their last few belongings onto the second boat.

“Now Peter? It will be dark before we get across!” said a concerned Andrew.

“Yes. Now,” Peter replied hurriedly as he drew up his tunic and moved back up the shoreline towards the Master’s boat.

“OK. Whatever you say,” agreed Andrew, “*HEY!! EVERYONE INTO THE BOATS!! WE ARE LEAVING!!*” he shouted waving his hands over his head, “*PUSH OFF!! WE’RE CROSSING NOW!*”

With all the boats on their way John was the first to speak, “What a day! Did you see the size of those crowds? It was amazing! How many do you think there were Peter?”

“More than I could count, they just kept coming,” Peter replied breaking off a piece of bread. Leaning to the rail of the boat, he continued, “Did you see how they hung on every word the Master spoke? They were still calling out to Him right up to the time He got into the boat. We should have stayed another day. I bet they would have all come back tomorrow! What do you think James?”

“I don’t know,” James rubbed his chin as he responded, “But I can’t wait to see what happens next. The Master is becoming famous. Everyone wants to see Him. I think He could go far.”

Life With Our Father

“Yes, I think He could become king of all Israel! I think we could march right into Jerusalem tomorrow and take over,” Peter’s voice rose with excitement as he spoke.

“YES! That’s what I was thinking! Has He said anything yet? Do you think He will do it?” asked James as he pulled a piece of bread for himself and John.”

“No James. He hasn’t said anything about it to me,” replied Peter, “But He must know how many people want to make Him King.”

John froze in place for a moment staring out into the dark night in front of the boat. “Hey Peter, did you feel that?” he asked quietly.”

“Feel what John?” Peter asked still thinking about a possible triumphant day to come in Jerusalem.

“That breeze,” replied John with concern, “There it is again. Did you feel it?” he asked.

Peter set his bread aside and stood to his feet, “Yes. I felt it,” he replied pulling his mantle up closer to his neck.

“Do you think a storm is coming?” questioned John.

“I don’t know. It’s hard to tell on this lake. The storms come so quickly here,” Peter paused for a moment to listen to the growing winds. He turned to look off beyond the stern of the boat through the murky darkness to the boats that followed. “Better tell the others to be careful,” he half whispered to himself.” Just then a gust of wind swept across the deck. Peter spun around and exclaimed, “James, call out to the other boats and tell them to watch out for.....,” caught in mid-sentence Peter grabbed for the rudder as the next gust of wind rocked the boat, “TOO LATE!! HERE IT COMES!” shouted Peter.

The disciples scrambled for anything to hold to. “It’s a bad one Peter! I saw one like this a few years ago,” someone shouted from Peter’s left, the noise of the storm now too great

The Better Life of Knowing God

to know who, “Six fishermen were drowned when they tried to...,” the voice trailed off in the din of the wind and waves.

The storm raged on, growing with a fury by the minute. “What do we do?” cried John to Peter the fisherman.

“John! Take the rudder!” commanded Peter, “James! Grab the oars! *AND EVERYONE HOLD ON!!*” screamed Peter now fearing the worst himself. He had never seen one like this.

“Peter!! The waves!! They’re coming over the sides!! We will be swamped!!” exclaimed John.

“Hold it into the wind John!” Peter cried back as loudly as he could but the sound of his words seemed only to be sucked away into the menacing gray waves now filling the boat.

“Peter!! Peter!! We’re breaking up!” cried James.

“Row, James, row!” Peter shouted and motioned with his arms.

“We’ll never make it!! The boat is nearly full!” came a voice that Peter thought was John’s.

“Row!” Peter yelled, his mind now tinged with a growing fear that he had never known on any voyage through his years on the sea.

“Hang on!! Here comes a big one! Someone screamed from the stern as voices now mixed beyond recognition in the melee. Grab the buckets!!! We need to bail out the water!!” “What?” “The buckets!!!” “I can’t hear you!!!” “The buckets!! Bail out the water!!!” “But the rudder...” “Forget the rudder!! It’s useless in this!! Bail!! Bail!!!”

“Peter!! It’s not working. We can’t bail fast enough!! We’re going down. We’re going to drown!! What do we do?” “Jesus!! Master!! Where is He?”

“He’s still asleep!” “What! I can’t believe it! Doesn’t He know what is happening? What is wrong with Him??? We are all going to die!! Doesn’t He care about us?” “Jesus!! Master!! We are going to drown!! Don’t you care?”

Quietly the Master arose to the deck of the boat. “Hush. Be still,” He said to the winds. And just as suddenly as they came, they were gone. And then turning to His friends he asked, “Peter, James, John, why were you so easily alarmed? Do you still have no confidence in me?” Jesus quietly turned to his resting place as the disciples gathered the boat’s equipment and supplies.

“Peter. The storm. It is gone! Vanished! This is unbelievable. He stopped a storm with only a few words. Who is this man?” whispered John.

“I saw it,” replied Peter softly, “Did you see His eyes?”

“His eyes?” John asked as he slid up next to Peter on the deck. What about His eyes?”

“When he spoke to us.....his eyes.....they looked right through me when he asked us why we had awakened him,” Peter said as he watched the Master slip back to his pillow, “What else could we have done? We were about to die,” he said with quietness in his voice.

“Yes,” Andrew spoke up from across the deck, “I felt it too. It seemed the storm meant nothing to him,” Andrew said with amazement, “What does all this mean?”

“I don’t know, John,” Peter responded quietly, “I don’t know.”

Two Perspectives - Ours and His

How many times have you found yourself in just such circumstances? I know I have. Pressed by the storms of life, crushed under what seem to be fatal waves of tribulation, scared to death, racked by fear. Imagine yourself in that boat during that terrifying storm. What would you have done? It seems only reasonable to cry for help in such a situation. So why did Jesus rebuke the disciples for their lack of faith? Why

The Better Life of Knowing God

was He disappointed? Doesn't God want us to cry out for help in times of trouble? The disciples were frightened. They simply called to Him for help. And anyhow, it was Jesus who set them onto the lake that evening. This was His fault. So why did they get rebuked?

To the disciples the storm meant sure death. They were convinced of impending doom. They did what was natural in that situation. They acted on their own understanding. They were simply evaluating the situation through their natural senses, seeing it through their own eyes, from their own perspective. But *that* was the problem - their perspective.

Jesus was on the same boat as the disciples. He was in the same storm. But unlike the disciples, He was resting comfortably. How could Jesus sleep through such danger? The answer is - perspective. To Him the storm held no danger because He knew that there was not a storm big enough to keep Him from fulfilling His Father's will. Jesus knew that He was not destined to perish in a storm. He knew that the Father had sent Him to give His life up on a cross. Jesus knew the Father perfectly and was resting in His Father's perspective.

The disciples relied on their own perspective of the storm and fell into fear followed by terror. We fear when we fail to see the events of life God's way. We fail to see it His way for one simple reason - we don't yet know Him. But there is great hope for us. He has made a way for us to know Him, and in that, a way to a much better life.

As humans, we tend to look through our own eyes at the workings and motives of God. This is a youthful, man-centered viewpoint. Proverbs 3:5 instructs us to

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding." (KJV)

If we want to know God, to understand Him and His ways in our life, we must see though His eyes. We must have His

Life With Our Father

understanding. Jesus was able to sleep through the storm because He understood the Father's love for not only the men in that boat, but for all creation - past, present and future. He was not going to die in that storm and He knew it. He knew that it was not His time. He had His Dad's perspective. And so, He just rested. Wow. Don't you wish you could live that way through the storms of your life? You can!

What does God want?

So why did these men receive a rebuke after such a terrifying ordeal? What did God expect from them?

The real issue, which they did not yet understand, was relationship. In their terror the disciples opened their mouths and accused Jesus of not caring. Look carefully again at what they asked Him:

Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

Mark 4:38 (NLT)

The accusation by the disciples that Jesus didn't care if they drowned was quite an insult. His very presence on the earth was to lay down His life for them one day very soon on a rough wooden cross. Here He was, the Son of God come to die in humiliation, so that they could be with the heavenly Father forever, and they were accusing Him of not caring. Look at how Jesus responded to their accusation:

Getting to his feet, he told the wind, "Silence!" and the waves, "Quiet down!" They did it. The lake became smooth as glass. Then he said to his disciples, "Why can't you trust me?"

The Better Life of Knowing God

Luke 8:24-25 (The Message)

The disciples had walked with Him and witnessed His love to others; His healings, His preaching, His tender care. And yet they could not believe that they were safe riding in the same boat with Him. They couldn't believe that He loved them enough and was a good enough friend to keep them safe through that storm. And they went right ahead and said that to Him. They accused Him of not caring. It was this accusation that brought the gentle rebuke from Jesus. God never rebukes us for calling for help. But He is insulted when we accuse Him of not caring, and is offended when we don't have faith in His love.

The gentle questioning rebuke, which Jesus spoke after calming the storm, had little to do with how great their faith was in His ability to control weather patterns; the issue there in that storm centered on relationship! He did not care much about their confidence in His almighty powers. He didn't come to earth to wow us. He came to be the way home to the Father. The tone of disappointment in His question came as a result of their lack of confidence in His love for them. He counted them as His friends and they doubted Him. They had traveled with Him and personally witnessed His love to all mankind and yet they doubted His personal care of them.

Anyone can believe in the power of God. History and the Bible both record cases of godly and ungodly men and women who believed in and acknowledged the power of God. Cain, the son of Adam who murdered his brother; Pharaoh, the prince of Egypt who tortured God's people; those who perished in Noah's day, and even Satan himself, all acknowledged the power of God. God cares little about who believes or does not believe in His power. If that was all He wanted, He could

Life With Our Father

simply pour out His miraculous supernatural power over the earth in a thousand different ways every day.

What God wants is relationship with His children. It was this desire for relationship (fellowship) with His friends that prompted Jesus to ask His disciples why they had no confidence in Him on that boat. He was disappointed because in spite of all of the compassion and love they had witnessed while traveling with Him, they still doubted His love for them.

Indeed, Jesus had not come to set up an earthly kingdom or to just display the Father's supernatural power on the earth. In His own words, He came "*to do the will of the Father.*" The will of the Father had not changed from the beginning since the time of the first people, Adam and Eve, in the garden. The will of the Father is to be with His children, to be with you and me.

The disciples on the boat did not yet see Jesus as the way to the Father. They had no perception whatsoever of the Father's ultimate desire of fellowship with them. If they had understood this divine desire they would have never feared the dangers of a simple storm. In their youthful ignorance they saw Jesus only in what He needed to do for them now - deliverance from a bad storm. They were like little children who cry when a parent fails to respond to a perceived danger as quickly as the child wishes. This is acceptable when children are small and have not yet learned to trust the love of their parents. But these men had been with Jesus and had witnessed His love and care first hand. In spite of this, they still had not come to understand the one issue that guaranteed their safety in that storm. They failed to see the heart-motive behind the power that would quiet that storm, which was their heavenly Father's love for them. In years to follow these same men would grow in the knowledge of their God to the point they would not even fear death by torture. One day they would come to know personally what motivated the heart of their God. In time they would

The Better Life of Knowing God

become pillars of the church and examples of how to walk in glorious relationship with the Father.

The greatest power in the universe works through the desire of our heavenly Father to be with you and me. In the disciples' failure to understand and have faith in this, "relationship based power," they offended the Lord and the Father, and plunged their own hearts into unnecessary fear. The disciples would have reached shore just as safely if they had believed in Jesus' love and simply rested with Him through the storm. Easier said than done? Yes maybe - but not impossible. If you will believe, all things are possible to you through Him. If you know the Father, you can rest through life's storms and you will reach the other shore safely because He will always respond to such confident *relationship-based* faith.

A proper and practical understanding of our Father's desire is foundational to every area of our life, from surviving the everyday storms of life to understanding life in the school of His Holy Spirit. We become more than victorious when we understand His motives. Lacking His perspective and failing to understand His heart condemns us to suffer in endless cycles of fear and frustration, and we miss the opportunity to rest in and enjoy His fellowship. This lack of understanding also robs Him of His ultimate desire, which is to be with us. Bill, the hair stylist, was caught in exactly this cycle of frustration, never really seeing how his heavenly Father really viewed him.

There is no need for you to tremble at the storms of life. There is no reason for you to fear failure, or loss, or even death. There is no reason to give up. He loves you dearly. He understands you completely. From before the foundation of the earth He knew you. He knows all of your weaknesses, all of your pains, all of your fears and all of your needs. You need never cry out questioning His care for you. He cares more than you can imagine. He has a plan for you - a good plan.

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It won't be long before this generous God who has great plans for us in Christ — eternal and glorious plans they are! — will have you put together and on your feet for good.

1 Peter 5:10 (The Message)

His greatest desire is to live with His children, to be with **you**. All of history is His love story showing how He moved and worked to bring us all to His house. We need never doubt our place in His hands! In Him we are more than just storm survivors, we are eternal children of the Most High God, born to rule, reign and live with Him. If you are willing to learn of His ways, you can fellowship with Him now in a great richness and enjoy the better life He destined for you.

So how do we get to know the Father? He is not visible. He is not physically here. But thanks be to God! He sent His Son Jesus Christ and made Himself known by Him.

he that hath seen me hath seen the Father (Jesus speaking)
John 14:9b (KJV)

Now we can look through His eyes. Now you and I can know the Father. We can see Him today!

Chapter 2

The Tearing of the Veil

What was God the Father doing while Jesus was on the Cross? How did He view the crucifixion? When I was a young Christian I believed that during the crucifixion the heavenly Father was sitting up above on a big white throne wringing His hands in silent agony until it was all over. My perspective has completely changed. I believe the Father's focus was on a building a few blocks away from the hill where Jesus died and He was excited at what was about to happen. And when His Son finished His mission on that Cross, you may be surprised what He did next.

But before we see it through His eyes, let's take a look at the crucifixion the way the disciples may have seen it.

Then Jesus shouted out again, and he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart, and tombs opened. The bodies of many godly men and women who had died were raised from the dead after Jesus' resurrection. They left the cemetery, went into the holy city of Jerusalem, and appeared to many people.

Matthew 27:50-53 (NLT)

“Peter. Peter is that you?” called John

“Yes John,” came a quiet voice from the bushes of the courtyard.

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“Peter. Why are you hiding there in the shadows? Peter, you’ve been crying. What is it? Do you weep for the Master?” asked John.

“No John,” replied Peter.

“Then what Peter? John asked, “I have never seen you weep like this before.”

“I did a terrible thing today, John,” Peter replied dropping his face into his hands.

“What Peter? What did you do?” John asked.

Peter brushed the dampness from his cheeks and between sobs said, “I followed the crowd that took the Master away today. They were treating Him like a common thief John, shouting curses and humiliating Him. They took Him to the high priest. I followed them into the courtyard and stood by the fire with the temple guards, and John, do you know what they did to him?” John sat silently as Peter continued, “I heard them screaming at Him inside. They were holding court. They were accusing Him of all kinds of wickedness and treason.”

“But why, Peter? What did He do?” asked John.

“He did nothing,” replied Peter quietly.

“Then why did they take him away? What does this all mean, Peter?” John asked.

“I don’t know, John. I don’t know,” Peter said as he stood to look back towards the temple.

“But what did you do? Why were you weeping?” John asked again as he stood next to Peter and placed his hand on his shoulder.

Tears returned to Peter’s eyes as he went on, “After the shouting stopped... they...” Peter fell to his knees, as he could speak no more.

“Peter, what is it? What happened after the shouting stopped?” John asked desperately.

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A full minute passed until Peter could regain his composure, he responded, “They were beating Him, John. I heard them punching Him and slapping Him! I couldn't bear to listen. John, they beat the Master!”

“They beat Him! Why? What is happening, Peter? Why is this happening?” John said as he too now wept at the thought of his friend Jesus being beaten.

“I don't know, John. I don't know,” replied Peter.

The first light of morning began to creep over the hills as Peter and John sat there quietly together. They had not spoken for a long while when John heard Peter begin to softly weep, “Peter, you are crying again. What is it?” asked John.

“John, do you remember what the Master told me at supper when I said that I would never leave Him?” Peter asked quietly, humbly.

“Yes, Peter, I remember. He said you would deny Him three times,” John responded softly.

“It happened, John. It happened just the way He said it would. While I was standing with the guards in the courtyard, a girl came up to me and asked if I was one of the Master's disciples. John, I said No! I said No, John! Three times! I betrayed Him three times! They were all staring at me and I... I...” Peter's voice crumbled away in his sobs again.

John waited a moment and then, placing his hand on his friend's shoulder, asked, “What Peter? What did you say?”

“I told them that I did not know Him!” Peter screamed through his weeping, “I betrayed Him like a coward, John. Oh, John... they were beating Him... and I... I denied Him! I acted as though I never knew Him! Oh God help me! Help me! *MY MASTER! HELP ME! WHAT HAVE I DONE??* John! What have I done?? What should I do??” Peter fell face down to the earth.

Life With Our Father

“I don’t know, Peter,” John responded kneeling beside his elder friend, “I am no better than you. I also ran when they took Him away,”

Peter pulled himself slowly to his feet. They walked together quietly a ways and as they were about to part John asked, “Did you hear what they are going to do with Him now?”

Peter turned to John and said, “I overheard one of the guards saying that they were to bring Him to Pilate tomorrow.”

John was visibly shaken by Peter’s response and said, “*PILATE* - but why? What are they thinking? Why would they bring Him to Pilate? Pilate is a Roman! We are Jews. What does this mean Peter?”

“John, we are not safe. They are searching for the Master’s disciples. We need to get off the streets and into hiding until all this blows over,” Peter warned, “Do you understand John?”

“Yes Peter,” John responded, “But what will they do to Jesus?” He asked.

Peter had enough of the day. He was spent and in need of a safe place to just close his eyes to it all. “I don’t know, John. Maybe tomorrow..., I just don’t know,” Peter mumbled back as he turned to go.

John watched quietly as his friend walked off into the morning sun and then moved off quickly to find anyone who might have news of his Master.

John raced along the shoreline desperately searching the docks and boats for Peter. He found him in the stern of a boat tending a net alone. “*PETER! PETER!*” exclaimed John.

“John! What is it?” Peter asked dropping his net. He could see the fear in his young friend’s face as he approached.

The Better Life of Knowing God

“Peter! Did you hear?” John asked as he rushed to Peter’s side.

“What, John, What?” Peter asked as he reached out with both hands to brace up John’s shoulders in front of him. John was exhausted and soaked with perspiration.

“Peter! *THEY ARE GOING TO KILL HIM!*” blurted John, “I just heard it! They are taking Him to be crucified! Peter! They are taking Him to His death! What should we do? *THEY ARE GOING TO KILL THE MASTER!*”

Peter felt his knees weaken at John’s report. The blood drained from his face. His mind raced. “*BUT WHY, JOHN? WHAT DID THEY SAY HE DID?*” he asked.

“*I don’t know! They were all screaming and calling for His death!*” John said as he began to weep softly. “Peter! What can we do? Why is Jehovah letting this happen?” he asked.

Peter had no words to answer. Turning he walked slowly back to his nets.

“I’m going!” John cried.

“Where are you going, John?” asked Peter. “I’m going to the hill where they are taking Him to be executed.” John turned and ran back up the shoreline without another word. Peter returned to his work with a rekindled memory of his betrayal pressing heavy on his heart. Again the tears began to fall as he plunged his face into the coarse fibers of the net he had been mending.

Peter’s heart jumped as he heard footsteps racing to his front door. “*PETER! PETER! PETER ARE YOU HOME?*” John cried while banging at Peter’s door.

“Yes, John. Come in,” replied Peter, “What is it?”

John was breathless as he asked, “Did you see the storm? Did you feel the earth shake?”

“Yes.” Peter answered, “It nearly brought down my roof.”

“*IT WAS HIM PETER!*” John exclaimed, “He was hanging there on the cross, they were laughing at Him and cursing Him and then He cried out and said, It is finished! And He died! I began to weep but then the ground under my feet shook and the rocks split open right before my eyes! And did you hear what happened in the temple?”

John was talking so fast that Peter could barely keep up. “The temple? The temple is on the other side of town! What happened in the temple, John?” Peter asked.

Grabbing for Peter’s arm, John nearly screamed, “*THE VEIL!* They said the veil in the temple ripped in two from top to bottom!”

“*WHAT? IMPOSSIBLE!*” pronounced Peter incredulously, “How could the veil tear? I know for a fact that the veil is as thick as my forearm at least!”

“*I KNOW! BUT IT TORE IN HALF!*” John insisted, “What do you think it means, Peter?”

“I don’t know,” Peter responded, “I don’t know what it could mean, but truly, He was the Son of God.”

The Father’s View of the Crucifixion

Just imagine the confusion and trauma of the disciples as their Master Jesus went to His death. The Scriptures tell us that they scattered like lost sheep. Even after walking with Him for three years during His earthly ministry they still had not yet come to comprehend the real meaning of His presence on the earth. And when the veil of the temple tore, they had no idea of the significance of the event. But it was a defining moment for the heavenly Father.

These moments surrounding the death of the Son of God have been dramatized in books, plays, and movies, countless

The Better Life of Knowing God

times through many generations. To this day, however, I have yet to see a depiction of the fullness of those last moments as they have been recorded here in God's word. In each case the writers, directors and producers skip over one of the most dramatic and exciting parts of the last few moments of Jesus' time on the Cross. They fail to depict the heavenly Father's view of the crucifixion. In failing to do so, the full revelation of the crucifixion is missed badly. This missing perspective is critical to you and me. To even begin to comprehend the depth of God's love for us (which was worked through the Cross) we must know how He himself viewed His Son's horrible death. We need to see what the crucifixion meant to Him, the Father, personally.

All church-attending Christians hear sermons and teachings about what the crucifixion means to us; forgiveness of sins, deliverance from evil, eternal life, peace, joy, provision, acceptance into His house, etc. These are all critical doctrines to our new faith in God, but these are man centered and only the first and most basic of truths. The Apostle Paul called them, spiritual milk. To get the meat of the message of the Cross we must begin to think higher. We must consider what this moment in time meant to our heavenly Father. When we see the crucifixion through His eyes, we get a new revelation, not only of how much He was willing to sacrifice to save you and I from damnation, but also a clear and dramatic insight into how passionate He was, and is, about having us with Him as His children, as His friends.

To unfold this revelation from the biblical account of the crucifixion, first consider the magnitude of what was happening on that hillside that fateful day. Jesus, the heavenly Father's only Son, was hanging on a rough wooden rack with nails driven violently through His hands and feet, bleeding from a wound in His side, agonizing through this slow

humiliating form of public execution, which was generally reserved only for the worst of criminals. And Jesus was innocent. He was not only innocent of any crime against the local and national governments, but He was without any sin in His entire life. He had never offended His heavenly Father. This was God's only perfect son, dying alone without the Father intervening. Where was the Father? To understand the answer to that question we must first travel back in time to a meeting God had with a man on top of a mountain.

Long before the day of Jesus' crucifixion, God met with a man named Moses for forty days and forty nights on a mountain called Sinai. Moses and God's people had just been miraculously delivered out of hundreds of years of slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt. They were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. When they reached Mount Sinai, God called Moses for a meeting. During that meeting God gave Moses commandments for the children of Israel to live by, and instructed Moses in the building of a tabernacle (or house), where God Himself would live with them as they traveled through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land.

Seven full chapters in the book of Exodus cover the design, construction and use of the Tabernacle. In Exodus chapter 29 verses 43 through 46, God reveals the purpose of that tabernacle:

I will meet the people of Israel there, in the place made holy by my glorious presence. Yes, I will consecrate the Tabernacle and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests. Then I will live among the people of Israel and be their God, and they will know that I am the Lord their God. I am the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt so that I could live among them. I am the Lord their God. (NLT)

The Better Life of Knowing God

There is that divine plan of the Father again - to be with us, and for us to be with Him. But inside that Tabernacle there was a problem. It was called, the veil.

The original Tabernacle (later to be the fixed Temple in Jerusalem) was a tent structure designed with the ability to be taken down and set up as the Israelites traveled through the wilderness and into the Promised Land. It was made up of an outer surrounding court and an inner court with two rooms, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The Most Holy Place (the place where God would dwell) was separated from the other room by a thick cloth curtain (or veil):

“Set up this Tabernacle according to the pattern you were shown on the mountain. “For the inside of the Tabernacle, make a special curtain of finely woven linen. Hang the inner curtain from clasps, and put the Ark of the Covenant in the room behind it. This curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place.”

Exodus 26:30-31a, 33 (NLT)

God’s problem with the veil is that it *separated* Him from us. God did not want to be separated from us. But that is exactly what that veil did. In that old tabernacle, behind the veil in that small room known as, The Holy of Holies, God would meet with Moses and the high priests alone, and then only a few men out of each generation for hundreds of years. By the time Jesus arrived at the Cross, the Tabernacle had become a large elaborate temple that rested inside the city of Jerusalem - only a short distance from Mount Calvary where Jesus was crucified.

To understand our heavenly Father’s view of the crucifixion we must fully appreciate how much He despised the old imperfect tabernacle/temple system of living with His

Life With Our Father

people. With every part of His being He wanted to be with His people in fullness. It had been many generations since He had walked with His creation in the garden. Since the original sin of His first man, and the separation it caused, he longed to regain His place in the lives of His people.

The old temple system, and the room behind the veil, must have been like a cage to the heart of our Father. Not in the sense that He was in any way bound to its bars involuntarily, but in the sense that it was the only way sinful men could even get close to Him until the crucifixion of His Son on the Cross. Why? It is because God is light and in Him is no darkness. If you turn on a light in a dark room the darkness is simply destroyed. If you have darkness in your heart and you step into the presence of God's perfect light what do you think would happen? That is why God could not see His children face-to-face until Jesus paid for our sins wiping out our darkness. That is why there was a veil in that tabernacle. Imagine having children but you cannot be with them except on the other side of a big curtain. That is what our Father faced because of our sins.

God wanted an end to this imperfect dwelling place. He worked through many generations in preparation for that moment in which His only Son would die as the last and perfect payment for your and my sins. Because Jesus was perfect, without sin, the sacrifice of His life would be all that was needed to once and for all pay the debt for sin and eliminate the need for a veil between the Father and His children.

As Jesus suffered those last few hours, the Father waited in glorious anticipation for that moment when that old stone-and-earth-built Tabernacle, and its restrictive veil of separation, would no longer be needed. At the moment of Jesus 's death, I believe the Father had both of His great big holy hands on that

The Better Life of Knowing God

thick veil of separation. And at the very second when Jesus gave his last gasp and died, I believe the Father violently and triumphantly ripped that now worthless veil of separation right down the middle from top to bottom. And then, full of joy, He danced! Or at least I personally believe He did. I believe He danced with such zeal that He shook the earth all around Jerusalem, splitting rocks and cracking open tombs.

Glory! Glory! It was finally finished! He could finally live in the hearts of anyone who accepted the sacrifice of His Son in faith! You! Me! Anyone! He wants to be with *EVERYONE*. He desires that not even one be lost! No more curtains of separation! No more blood sacrifices! No more waiting to talk and walk with His beloved children! His plan through the ages was finished! No, He was not wringing His hands in agony! He knew His Son would rise again. He was standing at the hated veil of separation in confident anticipation of the moment that He had waited upon for generations - *to be with you and me*.

The old veil of the tabernacle, that curtain which had stood between the Father and His children, was no more. Jesus, by His death, eliminated the veil and became Himself the new passage to the Father. From that point on to this day, anyone who would believe on Jesus and His sacrifice could walk right into the very presence of the Father without any fear of condemnation or judgment.

What an amazing picture of how great His desire is to be with us. He couldn't wait even a few minutes after His only Son died. Full of desire for us, He literally shredded that veil of separation at the very moment His Son breathed His last breath on the Cross. Here is the passion of His desire: to be with His people completely, forever.

This is the force that compels our heavenly Father to this day. He continuously reaches out to us, desiring that we not miss this great gift of fellowship made possible by the sacrifice

Life With Our Father

of His Son more than two thousand years ago. If, after everything He did for us on that day, we fail to grasp its true meaning, then the loss to Him and to us is truly tragic.

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus, our elder brother, we now have free access into the very presence of our Father. Because of Jesus we can be with our heavenly Father now, this very moment, without fear of rejection or condemnation. And by Jesus, the Father has his own desire, a dwelling place, with and in His Children.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NLT)

Chapter 3

He Chose to be Called Father

“Daddy, up!” my first-born exclaimed as he reached his little arms out to me. Wow! My heart just melted. It was the first time I heard him say Daddy. As you can imagine, he got his wish. I scooped him right up and gave him a big hug. His simple words had filled my heart. That feeling of being called Daddy for the first time is one I will always cherish.

Look at this great revelation about our God’s heart and plan:

And it came to pass, that, as he (Jesus) was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven...

Luke 11:1-2a (KJV)

Throughout history God used many titles to describe Himself. Each name or title revealed a particular aspect of His person: Almighty God, Judge, Lord of Hosts, Most High God, King of Kings. But to you and me, His children, He chose the title of, “Father.”

What we refer to as, the Lord’s Prayer, here in the Gospel of Luke is an instructional outline that Jesus used when teaching His disciples how to pray. He started this simple prayer by teaching them the name to use when talking with God in prayer. Notice He did not teach them to address Him as, “Our King,” or, “Our Judge,” but as, “Our Father.” Even

Life With Our Father

though He is our king and He is a judge to all, He is *Father* to His children. As His children we have the special privilege of addressing Him as, Father. In this privilege is a powerful revelation of God's desires.

At the moment of salvation, that new birth in Him, He gives us His very own Spirit. When God's Spirit enters us, He compels us to call out to the Father just as a newborn cries out to its mother and father. The Holy Spirit immediately starts His work as a teacher by teaching us His name - the name of *Father*. More specifically, when the Spirit enters, He causes us to cry, "Abba, Father."

But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:4-6 (NIV)

The word, Abba, is close to the English word, daddy. This word is more of a sound than an actual word. It is as a newborn that can't yet frame the whole word and sputters out, "da-da." Abba is baby language for, Father. In this personal title we begin to see how the title, Father, means much more than the positional head of a family.

When God calls Himself, Father, He is of course the head of His entire family. But to each individual child He is as close as, daddy. In my role as a parent I hold the title of father. To my children and their spouses however, I am not only, father, but also, dad. I am the head of our house, but to my children I am also the dad. I can be referred to as a father by anyone who knows I have children but the title, daddy, is one only my

The Better Life of Knowing God

children can use. It comes to children as a birthright, by marriage or adoption.

The initial Spirit-born stirring in us to cry, Abba, or, daddy, is the foreshadowing of the ultimate purposes of our heavenly Father's desires. That cry of infancy is representative not only of our new position gained by adoption into His family, but also of His commitment and love to those who believe on Him. It tells us from the start that although He is Lord, King, and Master to all of creation; He is Father and, Daddy, to us.

This simple principle is a cornerstone to our understanding of God. It is the first of our great lessons and our first great comfort as new spiritual children. Every newborn Christian should know that he or she has a daddy in the fullest sense. Without the foundational understanding of the personal significance of, Abba, a child of God is left alone in the confusion and challenges of new life lacking the confidence of knowing He is there for them as any good father would be for his children. When it is neglected, we are robbed of the graces and joys of early childhood in the home of our new Dad.

When we gain the understanding that He is a Father to us, we can grow and learn in peace without fear of failure or rejection. When we learn to see Him as He wishes to be seen, as a good father, we become truly free to enjoy every part of His life. And we become a blessing to Him as we walk in the faith and trust that any child shows a good parent. It is His position to be honored and feared as a judge, king, and lord of lords, but it is His great joy and delight to be viewed as a father and daddy by His children.

How frustrating it must be to the Father to have invested so much through so many generations only to see us wrestle needlessly because of a failure to understand His heart and His plan as our Father.

Life With Our Father

Many Christians see God as an outside force judging their efforts as failures or successes from behind a cold throne while leaving them to work out their own perfection. They know that Jesus saves, but often never come to realize that Jesus saves us SO THAT we can be with the Father as His children.

In the book of Hosea, God declares that His people are destroyed because of lack of knowledge, or a lack of knowing what He is all about. When we fail to understand the true desire of God's heart, we end up in an endless cycle of frustration and confusion. In this state of ignorance we work and toil to be good, while wrestling with our troubled consciences after each failure. It was never meant to be this way. A good father would never expect his children to grow themselves up. Instead he would continue to invest his own life into theirs, nurturing them each step of the way, and never forsaking them when they stumble. This is the essence of a father. This is the character of our heavenly Father. Look at this great Scripture recorded in Philippians 2:13:

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. (NLT)

Our Father not only desires us to be perfect, but He also works with us to make us *want* to be like Him, and, teaches us the ways to accomplish this lofty call. In fact, He enjoys the teaching process as much as the end results.

I vividly recall the first time my eldest son helped me with a household project. He was two years old at the time. Our vacuum cleaner had seen better days but still had some life remaining in it. My son and I set about the task of dismantling it for an overhaul. As we worked together on the kitchen floor, I tasted the first fruits of what would become many rewarding times of fellowship while teaching my son about life. As we

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labored together I experienced the joy of watching him learn the use of a screwdriver and pliers. I laughed at the grease he managed to smear all over his face. He stumbled and bumbled his way through each part of the project but I loved every minute of it.

When our project was completed I plugged the vacuum cord into the wall outlet while my son waited to throw the switch. With a proud smile on his little grease-covered face, he switched it on. As the old vacuum roared to life, in triumph he exclaimed, "Daddy, we did it!"

At that moment I began to realize what fatherhood was all about. To my son it was adventurous but at times frustrating also. To me it was more rewarding than any accomplishment I had experienced in life. It was a type of fellowship that can only be tasted between a parent and child. We had done it together. It was an accomplishment we both shared in; I was the guide and teacher, he was the student. I did not care that he was untrained and unprepared to meet the challenge and he did not fear the challenge knowing that his dad was there to do it with him. He trusted me as a good father to be patient and teach him. I was more than willing to help him because of my sincere love for him. There was no condemnation when he smeared grease over his face and he did not fear rejection when the test of the final product came. He did not see me as a critical judge standing over him during this challenge. He saw me as I wished him to see me, as his Dad. The result was pure joyous fellowship.

This parent - child fellowship is at the core of our heavenly Father's desires. Psalm 149:4a reads:

For the Lord delights in his people. (NLT)

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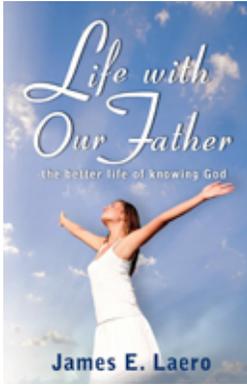
He loves the fellowship of His children. He takes pleasure in teaching us; working with us and helping us succeed. Our success brings Him glory just as a natural child's success brings glory to his or her natural parents. We were created to show His glory. In the process of working towards that end-result He glories in fellowship with us.

It is hard to imagine the great omnipotent creator of the universe taking pleasure working with us on the kitchen floors of our life – but it is true. More than the title of King, Lord and most-High-God, he desires to be known and treated as, Father.

PART TWO

WITH HIM IN HIS SCHOOL

Everyone who comes must come born again by His Spirit as a little child, humble, trusting, and ready to learn and grow naturally. Everyone starts at square one. It just can't work any other way. And that is perfect.



Life With Our Father is a glorious revelation of God as He desires us to see Him, and a very practical guide to understanding His ways, His house, and growing up in His life. This book will open your eyes to your heavenly Father's amazing plan for your life, and inspire you to take hold of the better life waiting for you through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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