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GOD DESIRED A FAMILY

Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure.

—Ephesians 1:4–6, NLT

THIS...IS WHAT HE *WANTED* TO DO! DID YOU CATCH THAT? AS MY British friends would say, “full stop,” we need to grasp something here. Can you get a sense of God’s priorities as He laid out the foundation of the world? Genesis 1 and on tells us all about God’s magnificent creation of the earth and everything in it—plants, animals, the sky, the oceans, the stars, it’s all fascinating—but here in Ephesians 1 we see God had something else in mind even before He created everything else. His desire was not merely to create a beautiful art project filled with wonderful and amazing things. Though He delighted in all He made, it wasn’t enough for Him. He desired to make a creature with whom He could have relationship. He made a creature He intended to interact with: mankind made in His image and special compared to all the other created things. Before the foundation of the earth, God desired to bring us into His family.

God instituted the family unit when He spoke to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:28) and fill the earth with children. He created marriage between a man and a woman to be an act that would bring them into total unity of “one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). God continued to show how much the family unit mattered to Him when He spoke within the Ten Commandment laws which protected parents and honoured the purity of the husband/wife relationship (Exodus 20:12,14,17). In the New Testament, Jesus continued to take up the cause for the family, teaching on the subject and the sanctity of marriage as He spoke against divorce under certain circumstances (Matthew 19:3–12). Paul and many of the New Testament authors gave commands and advice concerning family matters to the churches they served (Ephesians 6:1–11, Colossians 3:20–21).

God loves family! After all, He designed it. Throughout the Old Testament we see many statements of God’s desire to be known by His people as a Father. Deuteronomy 1:31 beautifully describes the Lord’s fatherly relationship to His people: *“there in the wilderness. . . there you saw how the Lord your God carried you as a Father carries His son. . .”* Again, in Psalm 103:13: *“as a Father has compassion on His children, so the Lord has compassion on all those who fear Him.”* In Jeremiah 3:19, God displays His broken heart over His people’s unfaithfulness: *“I would love to treat you as my own children”* He laments, *“I wanted nothing more than to give you this beautiful land. . . I looked forward to your calling me ‘Father’ and I wanted you never to turn from me.”*

Can you hear His heart here? He wanted nothing more than to be called Israel’s Father. Here the title He was requesting was not Lord, not Master, but Father. Fatherhood is a position God desires

to hold in the life of His people; “I am Israel’s Father. . .” (Jeremiah 31:9). Many men shirk the responsibility of fatherhood when they realize all it will demand of them. It will require everything of them. A father protects, a father guides, a father loves and builds up His children. A father disciplines for the good of His child. A father sacrifices his own wants and desires for the good of his family. A father is a leader, and leadership will demand him to mature. But even the best earthly Father cannot compare to the greatness of our Heavenly One. He is a Father to the fatherless, His love and compassion are endless, and He is completely righteous and good.

In Jesus’ instruction to us concerning prayer, He lays out the preferred title to address the supreme God. “*Our Father who art in heaven. . .*” (Matthew 6:9, emphasis added). In this prayer model is the fulfillment of the words given to Israel repeated to the church of the New Testament, “I looked forward to your calling me ‘Father.’” Through the words of Jesus, Father God encourages His children, “I want you to come to me and when you do please address me as your Father. It is from this place that I will answer you and treat you as dearly loved children of mine.”

We must come to Him addressing Him as He is. We must receive Him the way He has requested we receive Him—as our Father. In the beginning—before the beginning—God desired a family to Father. In the pages ahead, we will further illustrate that we are the realization of that desire. May the revelation that God *wanted* you and *created you to be with you* sink into your heart. This was always his plan, to be your Father and to have you as His child. His church is a family in which you belong! Let your heart exclaim truly, “I was always wanted. Now I am His and He is mine. . .forever!”