

Father

Joe Slater

Where did the word “father” come from? The background of the Hebrew term (abh) is uncertain, but the Greek term (patér) is from a root meaning nourisher, protector, upholder (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia).

Father can refer to your closest male ancestor; that’s the way we commonly think of it. But it can also mean a more distant or remote male ancestor (perhaps what we call a grandfather or a man with several “greats” before grandfather). The Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well said, **“Our fathers”** (that is, our ancestors from several generations back) *“worshiped on this mountain”* (John 4:20).

Most importantly, Scripture uses “Father” numerous times denoting God. We who are blessed to be fathers in the flesh strive to demonstrate those positive qualities of nourishing, protecting, and upholding that characterize our Heavenly Father.

Nourishing includes far more than merely providing a balanced physical diet for our children. It involves everything that supports growth; and spiritual growth is even more important than physical growth.

God provides the protection His children need from the storms and pitfalls of life. He is *“our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble”* (Psalm 46:1). Our children need the same protection from us as their earthly fathers.

Our Heavenly Father upholds us when the world would knock us down and when we, through weakness and sin, fall flat on our faces. Let us, as fathers, do the same for our children!

Happy Father’s Day!

An Anchor of the Soul

“We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (Hebrews 6:19).

According to some sources, Mark Twain nearly committed suicide at the age of 29. He was deep in debt and hated his job of writing a thousand-word column each day for a newspaper. His first hit as a writer was “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” That success turned his thinking and his life around.

Each of us has faced times of darkness and fear in his or her life. What did it take to help us overcome despair? A business turnover with gain? The love of someone special? Good health? A new job? All these things make our lives brighter.

However, one soon learns that gains in life are temporary. We can compare our lives to owning a house. As soon as we fix one thing, another problem pops up. Life is never static for good or bad.

When life gets tough, we are to *“lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet”* (Heb. 12:12). God has promised to give us a spirit of power and love and self-control and to be with us every step of the way.

“In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world,” Jesus said in John 16:33. When life is hard and makes us feel helpless and hopeless, we have Someone to turn to. We can flee to Him for refuge. Christ will give us encouragement to hold fast to the hope of heaven. May we always say, “At my lowest, Jesus is my hope. At my darkest, He is my light. At my saddest, He is my comfort. At my weakest, He is my strength.”

--Donna Wittlif (Ft. Worth, TX)

PERILOUS TIMES

“For you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:10 NAS).

The Jews looked down on the Gentiles, the Gentiles loathed the Jews, and the Pharisees despised the Jewish common folk. There was plenty of loathing back then as there is today. But the Lord makes a difference, changing self-loathing people into valued souls. Jesus died for sinners.

The Broadway musical Man of LaMancha, with its theme song, “To Dream the Impossible Dream,” featured a ridiculous knight named Don Quixote. He rides through the Spanish countryside mistaking windmills for giants. During his adventures he meets a cheap woman in a tavern. Any man can have this woman for one night, but no man wants her for life. Then Don Quixote rides into town. The people treat her like dirt. But Don Quixote bows before her as though she were a queen. She puts herself down, but he lifts her up. When she finally is convinced that he really believes in her, she begins to believe in herself. She found a friend who says she is priceless even when she feels worthless.

This story was told several times at a Marriage Encounter seminar Linda and I attended many years ago; it has left an indelible impression on us. We are here to help others to see themselves as lovable souls and give them hope. We may make a difference in the lives of those who sadly see themselves as losers.

Christian, let’s look past the veneer and see how damaged a precious soul is because of his or her past, and see that just a caring, loving helping hand may change a soul’s life for the Lord.

--Rob Redden (Arroyo Grande, CA)