

“ABBA, FATHER”: WHAT IS HE REALLY LIKE?

All verses are from the New American Standard Bible (NAS) unless otherwise noted.

Underlined portion of verses are my emphasis, to draw attention to the point that is being made.

The following are synonymous with “Abba, Father”: “God”, “God the Father”, and “heavenly Father”

The words of Jesus are in red.

TESTER

Lesson #7A

Purpose

This is the first of several lessons that will explore the truth that **Abba, Father** is a tester. Its purpose is to lay a foundation for what we will be studying in the upcoming lessons.

Introduction

Recently I was notified that it was time for another eye exam. My initial response was, “Oh no, not again”. Let me explain my negative reaction. I’ve worn glasses for over 60 years and thoroughly appreciate them due to the benefit they provide. However, the part of eye exams that I dislike is when I can no longer distinguish the difference in the two alternatives I’m asked to choose between. The ophthalmologist continues to ask, “Which is better?” as he switches back and forth between two screens while waiting for my answer. I squint to try harder to see some difference between the options, but I can’t. My frustration level begins to rise.



What is it that frustrates me so much? It’s certainly not due to any physical pain I experience but because, like many people, I have a bad attitude about all kinds of tests. Throughout school I struggled with mediocre grades, except in math, because of an inability to remember factual information long enough to write it down correctly on a test. Only later in life did I realize that I am proficient at remembering factual information when it has practical application to subjects that I’m interested in. So as I’ve matured I’ve learned to accept my weaknesses and strengths and tell the doctor more quickly than I used to, “The first one”.

My father owned a successful many faceted automobile business for over 40 years, but as a teenager I had little interest in following in his line of work. Therefore I had little desire to learn what he tried to teach me about repairing automobiles. When I was 17 my father put the training he had provided to a test by giving me the task of replacing the metal bumper which had been bent in an accident. Someone with a little more sense might have thought that the bumper could be under some stress and that taking the bolts out would allow the bumper to move. My failure to understand this simple truth resulted in Dad rushing me to the emergency room with a gash that required several stitches. After a few more similar goofs, like draining the oil from the transmission pan rather than the crankcase, my father realized that I lacked the “want to” for repairing cars. Instead, he began encouraging my skills in math and my desire to become a statistician.

Some lessons from my experiences:

- Many of us approach every test with a negative attitude, and in so doing we set ourselves up for failure. Maybe in the past you’ve worked hard to make good grades but have only experienced little or mediocre success in most areas. This may have caused you to believe the lie that you’re inferior and/or that there is something wrong with you.
- My Dad put me into a situation where my skills and training would be tested. He had adequately prepared me with training and by providing the right tools necessary to accomplish the job. With his whole heart my father wanted me to succeed, but he understood I had to draw upon everything he had provided to pass the test. Later, after I became a father and had similar experiences with my own sons, I began to understand how much a father hurts when his children fail a test. Fathers

instinctively know that their children have to be tested in life for them to grow. In this they are following the example of our **Abba, Father** who tests all his children. **Abba, Father** provides the right training and tools so that each and every one of His children may succeed by passing every test He brings or allows into their lives.

Life Is Full Of Tests

Throughout life every person will experience testing, whether they are a child of God the Father or not. The majority of tests come simply from living in this world. Tests are often called by some other names such as exams, trials, temptations, or hardships. Accidents and persecutions are two other types of tests that Jesus was specifically questioned about:



Luke 13:1-5 (New Century Version)

1 At that time some people were there who told Jesus that Pilate had killed some people from Galilee while they were worshipping. He mixed their blood with the blood of the animals they were sacrificing to God. **2** Jesus answered, "**Do you think this happened to them because they were more sinful than all others from Galilee?** **3** No, I tell you. But unless you change your hearts and lives, you will be destroyed as they were! **4** What about those eighteen people who died when the tower of Siloam fell on them? Do you think they were more sinful than all the others who live in Jerusalem? **5** No, I tell you. But unless you change your hearts and lives, you will all be destroyed too!"

The implication behind this question was the common thought by Jews that a premature death for any reason meant that God was punishing the person for some hidden sin. Those that asked the questions may have thought they were better than those that died or were killed. Jesus makes it clear that experiencing accidents and/or even religious persecution doesn't mean an individual is a worse sinner than any one else. In one way or another they are just being tested. A modern example can be seen in the life of Merrill Womach as told in his book, "Tested By Fire". Merrill was a singer that made and provided Christian music for funeral homes. In 1961 Merrill had just taken off in his private airplane when the engines quit, the plane crashed and then exploded with over 100 gallons of fuel. He was terribly burned and had over 50 surgeries trying to repair the damage. Generally any kind of burns around the face destroys the vocal chords as the person breathes in the hot air, but miraculously, his were not damaged. Merrill was gifted with the ability to sing four octaves, which is twice the normal range. He developed a system whereby he recorded two songs where he sings all the different parts so that it sounds like a choir of men. If you're interested in reading an article about Merrill, click on this link: <http://www.people.com/people/archive/article/0,,20079847,00.html> Merrill's testimony had a powerful impact on military men wounded in battle as seen in this video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gt-aWvS4eUA>



Abba Father: A Tester

From Genesis to Revelation scripture has much to say about how our heavenly Father tests individuals, churches, nations, angels, and even the whole world. Adam and Eve were tested in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:14-3:19) when God told them that they could eat the fruit of every tree in the Garden except one. They failed the test when they chose to disobey God the Father's clear instruction and instead listened to and obeyed the devil's suggestion. Since then every individual has suffered to some degree physically, emotionally, and spiritually with misery and death due not only to Adam and Eve's choices, but also our own choices in regard to those to whom we listen to, believe, and obey. Here are just a few of many other examples in the bible of those whom God tested, some who passed and some who failed:

- Abraham (Gen 22:1-19, Heb 11:17-19) - God the Father tested Abraham by asking him to give up the one thing he loved the most, the son that God had promised him. This test revealed what was truly at the heart of Abraham's relationship with God (Gen 22:12). From this test Abraham experienced four foundational truths:
 - 1) God the Father could truly be relied upon to provide (Gen 22:14), although sometimes His provision only comes at the very last moment (Gen 22:10).

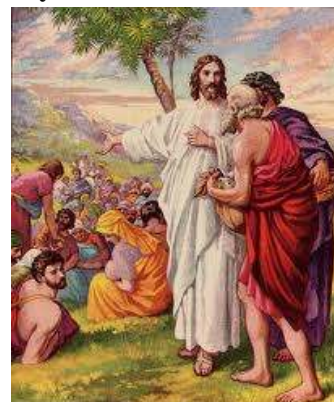
- 2) The reality that if you hold on too tightly to something you love you may lose it, but if you're willing to give it up then you may be allowed to keep it (Luke 14:25-33).
 - 3) God gave much more back to Abraham than He asked Abraham to give up (Gen 22:16-18). See also Mark 10:29-30 for Jesus' teaching about this truth.
 - 4) Hearing and obeying God, especially when it's going to cost you something you love, is often the way God the Father works to bless others through you (Gen 22:18).
- The Nation of Israel – Deut 8:2 & 16 (1-20) & Jud 3:1-6 - Just two of the many instances in Scripture where God tested his people to find out what was in their hearts.
 - King Hezekiah – 2 Chron 32:31 with 2 Kgs 20:12-19 - God left the King to himself to see what he would do and what was in his heart.
 - Joseph – Psa 105:16-22 is a concise summary of Genesis Chapters 37 & 39-41 - Through many years and difficult circumstances that Joseph experienced; he was tested until God the Father fulfilled His word to Joseph that had originally come to him as a teenager in a dream.
 - Christians scattered like foreigners in various regions – 1 Peter 1:1-2 & 4:12-13 Peter explains that they should not be shocked or think something strange was happening because of the difficulties they were experiencing, and then he goes on to explain what God's purpose was in these tests.

Jesus: A Tester

Jesus, being the exact image of God the Father (Heb 1:1-3, & 2 Cor 4:4), operates precisely the same way as his heavenly Father – he tests those who follow him to see what they will do in a ministry situation:

John 6:4-9

- 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand.
- 5 Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "**Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?**"
- 6 And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do.
- 7 Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little."
- 8 One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him,
- 9 "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are these for so many people?"



Jesus wasn't asking Philip because he was confused and didn't know what to do. Jesus had already received instructions from his heavenly Father and knew what he was going to do. He was using the opportunity to test or discover what was going on in Philip's heart and mind. Philip's words reveal that he wasn't listening to God the Father like Jesus was. Instead, Philip was thinking of meeting the need with only human means and resources. Andrew, who apparently overheard the conversation between Jesus and Philip, jumps in and by his words reveals what was going on in his heart. He saw what was available (5 loaves and 2 fishes) but saw it as insufficient to meet the need of such a large crowd. It's a shame that neither apostle thought of asking Jesus if he would meet the need. There was plenty of historical evidence that God the Father would provide food for his people:

- In Ex 16:13-15 God the Father provided manna (bread like substance) for possibly up to 2 million people six days a week for almost 40 years.
- Elijah the prophet had food provided for him by God the Father on three different occasions:
 - 1) By ravens – 1 Kgs 17:6
 - 2) After he miraculously multiplied oil for a starving widow and her son – 1 Kgs 17:15
 - 3) By an angel – 1 Kgs 19:5-8
- The prophet Elisha, who knew to listen to and follow God the Father's leading, had 100 prophets that he was responsible for feeding during a famine (2 Kgs 4:38-41). He first commands that a stew be made, so a person is sent to find something to put in it and gathers some gourds from an unknown wild vine. As the men began to eat the stew they quickly discerned that there was death in it. Elisha heals the stew by putting flour in the pot, providing food for the men to eat. Later a man comes bringing

Elisha 20 loaves of bread and some grains (2 Kgs 4:42-44), so Elisha tells the servant to set it before the men. However, the servant was reluctant to set such a small amount of bread before 100 hungry men. Elisha tells him to go ahead anyway and explains that there would be plenty for everyone with some left over, and so it was.

Now let's go back to Jesus' encounter with Philip and Andrew. At this time Jesus was about half way through the 3½ years of his public ministry, so the Apostles had walked with Jesus for almost two years. They had already seen him do a great variety of miracles, signs, healings, deliverances, water turned into wine, the dead resurrected, and a storm calmed. These experiences were on the job training that was intended by Jesus to prepare the Apostles for when they would be sent out on their own. But Philip and Andrew failed the test when they looked only to human provisions rather than looking to Jesus. How this must have saddened Jesus' heart. What an opportunity Jesus was giving Philip and Andrew. If they had only responded by turning to Jesus in expectant faith and said something like, "Jesus, we know you're able to meet this need. How would you like to do it?" Can you imagine the smile that would have come across Jesus' face as he knew that they were finally getting the idea of who he was and what he could do?

Summary And Personal Application

Abba, Father:

- Is a tester and He truly wants all of his children to pass every test.
- Will make certain that we have been provided the proper training and sufficient tools, but we have to remember and draw upon those items lest we fail the test.
- Will test to see what is in our heart, what we will do, and/or where we will look to meet the needs of those needing ministry. These three reasons are only a partial list of many stated in the Bible of why He tests.

We need to:

- Consider our own heart attitude about being tested. If it's negative, then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the reason why and then take it to Jesus and allow him to heal our heart and change our attitude.
- Remember the miracles that God the Father did through individuals in the Old Testament and in the New Testament through Jesus and other individuals.
- Like Jesus, we must listen to and/or see what our heavenly Father is doing if we desire to see supernatural things to happen through our ministries. However, we also must remember that Jesus said he could do nothing of his own accord, but acted only when he saw or heard what his Father was doing (John 5:19-20).
- Look to God our Father, give Him what is available, and then trust Him to use it to provide whatever is needed when ministering to those He brings to us.
- Not look at the inadequacy of our own resources when ministering to the needs of people.
- Take to heart the words of Jesus in Luke 13:3 & 5, "...**unless you change your hearts and lives, you will also be destroyed**" and ask the Father how they apply to our own life, Jesus words are just as applicable for us today as they were for the Jews that Jesus originally spoke them to.

The next lesson will focus on how Jesus was tested by his heavenly Father, but also tempted by Satan. Both the test and the temptation centered on Jesus' ability to master his appetite for food.

We appreciate your taking time from your busy schedule to read this lesson. If you have any comments or questions, please use our blog by clicking on this link: <http://www.rtbministry.org/blog.html>

In Abba Father's service,
Jim & Susan McCorkle
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