

Guest Speaker: Ben Courson
Happy Heavenly Father's Day
Galatians 4:6

connect groups

June 21, 2015

Jesus is the pioneer of our faith. We get to follow in the footsteps of our great leader—the Alpha and Omega (see Revelation 1:8), the author and finisher of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2), the very image of God (see 2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus shows us what God looks like: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). On this Father’s Day, Ben Courson helped us consider that dads get to reflect the invisible Father as *imago Dei*, made in the image of God.

Jesus Himself is “the image of the invisible God” (Colossians 1:15). The Greek word for *image* is *eikón*, which means *portrait*. A modern translation of Colossians 1:15 would read, “Jesus is the photograph of the invisible God.” When did the photograph of God develop most completely? At the crucifixion. When the sky went black, like in a dark room, the picture of God’s love was exposed. In the same way, the negative moments of our lives produce good things: “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).
What negative things have produced positive results in your Christian walk?

Because of Jesus, we have an intimate relationship with our Creator. In Galatians 4:6, Paul likened God to a papa, calling Him “Abba, Father!” It wasn’t a new concept; the Greeks called Zeus the father of the gods, and the Romans did the same with Jupiter. But while these gods were creators, they were not caretakers. They procreated but did not protect. They expressed paternity but were not papas. Paul told of a God who loves and cares; that’s the fatherhood of God. **What practical ways do you, your dad, or a dad you know show affection and love as a father?**

This view of God went beyond the Jewish understanding of God. Only the high priest got to experience God, and only on one day of the year—the Day of Atonement. But Paul turned this on its head: all who believe have access to God every day through Jesus Christ. **Read Matthew 27:51, Romans 5:2, and Ephesians 3:12. Why was having this “access” so novel and thrilling to early Christians—and to us now?**

We are no longer under the “spirit of bondage” (Romans 8:15), but are adopted sons and daughters. Because God is our Father, we have nothing to be afraid of. “Fear not” is one of the most frequent biblical commands. If God made all creation, we need not be afraid; God is for us and will protect us. **What kind of lives would we live if fear was not a factor?**

Ben described how his dad, Jon Courson, is a picture of joy. He lost a wife and a daughter, but through tragedy,

he is joyful. Why? Because he knows that his heavenly Father is a Papa. He is there through everything, and in the end, He will throw a huge party, showing once and for all that what the enemy meant for evil, He turns to good. To be a gloomy Christian is a contradiction of terms. When we change the way we look at things, we can watch God change how things look.

There are lots of ways that dads can be like our heavenly Papa. God loves to laugh and wants our joy to be full; in His presence is fullness of joy (see Psalm 16:11). Did you know that God also rejoices over you with gladness and singing (see Zephaniah 3:17)? We are God’s *poiéma*, His workmanship (see Ephesians 2:10); God is composing His music in our lives. The white keys of the piano represent happiness, and the black keys represent sadness—but both are needed to make music. **How are you doing when it comes to praying, singing, and laughing in your life?**

When Ben was a kid, he once scored for the wrong team while playing basketball. However, he was on a team with a guy named Kyle Singler, who went on to play professionally, and it was because of Kyle that their team won. So, it’s not about who we are, but whose team we are on. Even if you’ve scored for the other team, you’re still on God’s team, and you’ll ultimately win. David, Paul, and Peter all failed, as well as others throughout history: Thomas Edison, Dr. Seuss, Van Gogh, Harrison Ford, Beethoven, Winston Churchill, Walt Disney—but they all went on to great success. We are stars in the Father’s eyes: we “shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). **Christians can shine in the darkness of the world even when we are struggling. How? Give an example.**

Studies have shown that happiness increases 10 percent on Fridays. This shows that we place too much stock in outward circumstances. We need to look to God to refine our outlook. We need to rest in God in our overstressed world, seeking our Abba Father. We can leap for joy, even in difficult times. Jesus slept during a storm because He rested in God. More than just napping, it’s about peace in knowing that God is in control and for us. We need to stop telling God how big our mountains are; instead, we should tell our mountains how big our God is. Every setback is a setup for a comeback. **Read Psalm 37:7. How do you rest in God during difficult times?**

Adapted from Ben Courson’s teaching