

Affirming the Essentials of Our Faith

A Study of the Apostles Creed

All Scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless otherwise noted.

God The Father

Father of all creation

Q – When you think of God, what type of relationship do you see in God?

Malachi 2:10 Have we not all one **Father**? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?

Acts 17:28–29 ²⁸ for “ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’ ” ²⁹ Being then **God’s offspring**, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

Q – What does it mean for God to be a Father?

Q – What does the statement “we are his offspring” say about God’s fatherhood?

Q – How do you think many people, specifically those who are not Christians, understand, God as being father?

- Some who stress the **universal fatherhood** of God treat it as implying that all men are and always will be in a state of salvation.

Q – What do you think? Is that what Scriptures tells us?

Both of the above passages refer to situations of God’s wrath. He is our Father, in the sense of **creating us**, but we are not all his children, in the sense of gaining a Father’s favor. There are two distinct ways of view the fatherhood of God:

- God as Father of the Creation
- God as Father of the Faithful

God as Father of Creation does not imply his favor and acceptance. We know that God’s favor requires **repentance** and **faith** in Christ. When the New Testament speaks of God’s fatherhood it is not with reference to creation, but in two further connections.

Father of Jesus Christ

Q – What does the relationship between the Father and Son mean?

Within the eternal Trinity is a family relation of Father and Son. On earth, the Son called the One whom he served “my Father” and prayed to him as *Abba*.

Abba – Aramaic word for “father” used by Jesus to speak of His own **intimate relationship** with God. Some translate *Abba* as “**Daddy**”, conveying a close, personal meaning.

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Abba does not occur in the OT, its Hebrew associate *Ab* occurs frequently. *Ab* usually refers to a **human father**. The OT speaks of God in the role of Father to Israel (Exod. 4:22; Deut. 32:6; Isa. 45:9–11; Mal. 2:10) or to Israel’s king (2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:7; 89:26–27).

Abba is mentioned **three** (3) times in the NT, always in the context of prayer. Mark adds the word “*Abba*” to Jesus’ pleading with the Father (14:36), indicating that Jesus prayed in the everyday language of the family.

Mark 14:35–36 ³⁵ And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ And he said, “**Abba**, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

In the NT, *Abba* is always used to address God and is followed immediately by the translation (Mark 14:36; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6). This double expression was common in the early church. It may be a translation of the Aramaic word, or it could be a very personal address to God – Daddy.

Q –What do you think Jesus’ Jewish contemporaries thought of him calling God *Abba*?

- Jewish contemporaries considered calling God “*Abba*” disrespectful, because they considered *Abba* to be overly familiar in addressing God.

On the one hand, the Son loves the Father (John 14:31) and always does what pleases the Father (8:29).

John 14:31 “...but I do **as the Father has commanded me**, so that the world may know that I love the Father.”

John 8:28–29 ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. ²⁹ And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for **I always do the things that are pleasing to him.**”

Jesus does as the Father commands and teaches, and what is pleasing to the Father (5:19ff., 30). Jesus cleaves to the Father’s known will. “My Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt ... thy will be done” (Matthew 26:39, 42). “Shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?” (John 18:11).

Jesus says He can do nothing on His own.

John 5:19–20, 30 ¹⁹ So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. ³⁰ “I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.”

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On the other hand, the Father loves the Son (John 3:35; 5:20) and makes him great by giving him glory and great things to do (5:20–30; 10:17 ff.; 17:23–26). Giving life and executing judgment have been wholly committed to him (5:23).

John 3:35 “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand.”

John 5:22–23 ²² “The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father...”

God’s loving fatherhood of his eternal Son is both the model of his gracious relationship with his own redeemed people and the model from which derives the parenthood that God has created in human families. Paul spoke of “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” as “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named” (Eph. 1:3; 3:14). Human families reflect the Father-Son relationship, and parent-child relationships should express a love that corresponds to the mutual love of Father and Son in the Godhead.

Father of the faithful

Q – How does one become a part of God’s family, become a child of God?

- Every person who is in the family of God (church) becomes a member in the same way – we are adopted! No one is born into God’s family!

Paul used *Abba* to describe God’s adoption of believers as His children (Rom. 8:15) and the change in the believer’s status with God that results (Gal. 4:6–7). God is the Father of the church – the faithful!

Galatians 4:4–7 ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that **we might receive adoption as sons.** ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Romans 8:14–16 ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the **Spirit of adoption** as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

Adoption and **regeneration** are two separate things. Adoption is bestowing a relationship from the Father to the Church. Regeneration is the changing of our moral character, to be more like that of the Son. Once we accept Jesus (God the Son) as our Lord and Savior and trust in His work on the cross, we are adopted into God’s family. Regeneration is the *process* of God’s adopted children becoming more like His Son Jesus.

Q – How is the family of God (the church) told to pray to God? (“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.” – Matt. 6:9)

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The Father Almighty

Q – What are some things we use to describe God?

Q – Is it important to declare God “Almighty”?

Q – What sort of things does the word “Almighty” convey?

- All-powerful, sovereign, Lord, King, Ruler
- Another word for all-powerful is omnipotent (*omni*=all, *potent*=power)
- The phrase “God Almighty” comes from the Hebrew words *El Shaddai*.

Genesis 17:1 ¹ When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am **God Almighty**; walk before me, and be blameless,

Genesis 35:10–11 ¹⁰ And God said to him, “Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.” So he called his name Israel. ¹¹ And God said to him, “I am **God Almighty**: be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall come from your own body.

Sovereignty – God’s rule and authority over creation.

Power – God’s ability to bring about anything He desires.

God’s sovereign rule is proclaimed and praised with joy (Psalm 93, 96, 97, 99:1–5, and 103). Some treat God’s sovereignty as controversial, but in Scripture it is matter for worship.

Psalm 93:1–4 ¹ The LORD **reigns**; he is robed in majesty; the LORD is robed; he has put on **strength** as his belt. Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved. ² Your **throne** is established from of old; you are from everlasting. ³ The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their roaring. ⁴ Mightier than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, **the LORD on high is mighty!**

Psalm 91:1–2 ¹ He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the **Almighty**. ² I will say to the Lord, “My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.”

Revelation 4:8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord **God Almighty**, who was and is and is to come!”

Job 42:1–2 ¹ Then Job answered the LORD and said: ² “I know that you can do **all things**, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Q – What does God’s sovereignty and power mean? What does it *not* mean?

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- God cannot do something illogical – make a square circle, make a rock too heavy for Him to lift.
- God cannot (will not!) do something contrary to His character – sin!
- God cannot cease to be God.
 - Jesus ceased to *exercise* His full divinity when He became God in the flesh!

Q – Does believing these things limit God? Is He any less omnipotent?

A.W. Tozer claims that God’s sovereignty necessarily means He is All-Powerful, All-Knowing, and All-Free. If there was anything He couldn’t do, anything He didn’t know, or anything He was not free to do, He would NOT be sovereign.

Q – What do you think about that? Can God be completely sovereign and NOT possess these?

Q – Is God’s power to fulfill his purposes limited by man’s freedom to choose?

- Not free will! The only Being with the power and freedom to choose and do what He chooses is God.
- However, God has *granted* certain freedoms to man. God wants a relationship, not a robot!

Q – What about the existence of evil? How does God’s power and God’s sovereignty relate to the existence of evil? Does the existence of evil mean God is not All-Powerful?

Theodicy – the vindication of divine providence in view of the existence of evil. Sometimes referred to as the “Problem of Evil”.

Q – What are some ways to view God’s sovereignty and power and the existence of evil?

- God is not really Good – We take it on faith that God is good and loves His creation, and more importantly, His children.
- Evil is not really evil – Pain seems to be bad. Even God hates sin, wickedness, and wicked people, so it must be bad.
- God created/allowed the evil to bring out the “most good” – Wouldn’t God be powerful enough to bring about the “most good” without evil? If He chose this means, is He then All-Good?
- Best of all possible worlds – This world, with evil, is actually the best of all possible worlds God could have created.
 - God creates a world and declares it good – only one thing not good! (Man being alone!)
 - God creates man who can choose how to respond – relationship!
 - Sin affected all creation and thus introduced pain and suffering.

Creation Order Theodicy

The "Creation-Order" (C-O) means there is a physical ordering of nature as well as a moral

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ordering of the universe. In this well-ordered environment **moral agents** (man) are free to exercise the divinely given ability of **moral choice** and can therefore choose to love their Creator or conversely to rebel against their Creator. God's creatures are responsible for their own evil acts and God, who only gives good gifts, cannot be blamed.

Q – What effect did sin have on the universe?

St. Augustine believed that part of regeneration was the believer can choose good and evil – whereas the complete being was totally depraved and was drawn to only what is evil.

Q – What role does mankind play in the pain and suffering of this world?

Q – When people wish there were no evil or pain in the world, are they not wishing for Heaven?

God works through (or in spite of) the evil of this world to accomplish His purposes!

Genesis 50:19–20 ¹⁹ But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? ²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.

Acts 4:23–28 ²³ When [Peter and John] were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “**Sovereign Lord**, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples **plot in vain**? ²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’ — ²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever **your hand and your plan had predestined to take place**.

We see a small fragment of the whole picture. God sees the entire masterpiece, the completed painting. God is painting the whole story with strokes of divine providence and human responsibility.

“The truth of God’s almightiness in creation, providence, and grace is the basis of all our trust, peace, and joy in God, and the safeguard of all our hopes of answered prayer, present protection, and final salvation. It means that neither fate, nor the stars, nor blind chance, nor man’s folly, nor Satan’s malice controls this world; instead, a morally perfect God runs it, and none can dethrone him or thwart his purposes of love.” – J. I. Packer