

*I will dwell in them  
And walk among them  
And I will be their God  
And they shall be my people  
And I will welcome you  
And I will be a Father to you  
And you shall be  
Sons and daughters to me  
Says the Lord Almighty*

(2 Corinthians 6 verses 16 and 18) NIV

This book is written in celebration of the words  
at the opening to this book  
It is an invitation for you to share in that  
celebration.

God invites you to see Him and love Him as your  
Father.

The Christian person is born of God.

The Christian person is a son or daughter of  
Father God.

Please join me in exploring and enjoying the  
revelation of  
God as perfect Father

Your perfect Father who loves you  
He wants the best for you  
He thinks the best of you  
He wants to bless you abundantly  
To pour His favour on you  
To lavish His love upon you  
To provide for your every need

He sees you as wonderful  
He delights in you  
He sings over you  
He loves you

He is trustworthy and pure  
Good and kind  
Big and strong  
Great and mighty  
Tender and gentle  
This is our God  
This is your heavenly Father

As it says in Scripture:

*Yet to all who received him  
( Jesus )  
To those who believed in his name  
He gave the right to become  
Children of God  
Children born not of natural descent  
Nor of human decision  
Or a husband's will  
But born of God ( the Father )  
(John 1 verse 12 - 13)*

*....But you received  
The Spirit of son-ship  
And by him we cry "Abba Father."  
The Spirit himself  
Testifies with our spirit  
That we are God's children....  
(from Romans 8 verse 15 - 17)*

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## *Section One*

*Father God's heart for  
you*

*How great is the love  
The Father  
Has lavished upon us  
That we should be called  
Children of God  
And that is what we are!*

(1 John chapter 3 verse 1)

## Father loves you

The following is in the form of a letter from God the Father to you His child.

I have found it helpful to read and re-read this aloud to myself as a letter from Father God. You might feel it right to do the same:

*My dear child*

*To help you understand my love for you*

*I want you to know that I love you*

*As a good father adores and loves his child*

*I sing over you*

*I rejoice over you*

*And I love you because you are my child*

*It is not about what you do*

*Although if you love me*

*You will want to obey me and love me in return*

*But I love you anyway*

*You are wonderfully made*

*It is I who made you*

*You are unique and special*

*I made no other like you*

*And to me you are magnificent*

*I just want to favour you and bless you*

*With all the blessings and inheritance  
Of what I have in store for you*

*I ache when you ache  
I weep when you weep  
I laugh when you laugh*

*I want to throw my arms of protection around  
you  
But also want to release and set you free  
So I can see you grow into the fullness of all that  
there is for you*

*I love you so much  
I sent Jesus to deal with the barrier of sin  
That separates us  
And for that He had to die on a cross  
If you don't understand that then just believe  
There was no other way*

*I love my son so much  
And I love you that much  
I made you  
You are my child  
Run to me  
I am waiting here with open arms to greet you*

*I will not treat you as some earthly fathers treat  
their children  
Even the best earthly fathers can hurt their little*

*ones*

*But I am the best Father you could hope for*

*I wait with longing for you to come back to me  
Through Jesus and what He has done*

*If you believe in my son and turn to Him  
Then you can be born again  
Not of an earthly father and mother  
But of me as your heavenly Father*

*And you can call me Father*

*Jesus my first-born son calls me Abba or Daddy  
And you can do the same  
when you are born of my Spirit*

*Please know my love is not  
soppy or sentimental but  
Strong and real  
Powerful and protective  
Fierce and tender  
Passionate and patient*

*I want us to walk and talk together*

*In the Bible you will find these words*

*God so loved the world*



*That He gave His only Son  
That whoever should believe in Him  
Should not perish  
But have eternal life*

*And this is eternal life  
That we might know Him*

*And to all who received Jesus  
And believed in His name  
He gave the right to become  
Children of God*

*Do you know me as your Father?*

*© john 2009*

Well, I hope that was alright for you. I pray you were able to receive Father God speaking to you in this way. His greatest desire is to know and be known, to enter into restored relationship with you and me – isn't that why Jesus came?

In this book I want:

*To help you see, understand and believe  
in God's love for you as your perfect,  
loving Father*

*To help you deepen your relationship  
with Father God – to know God as Father*

*For you to be able to begin to deal with  
issues relating to earthly father and  
mother*

*For you to be able to worship, love and  
relate to God as your Father*

*For you to finish reading this book filled  
with the fullness of God, and continue to  
walk with Father every day.*

Let me continue by sharing something of a  
father's heart. In the following pages I look at  
what it means to me to be an earthly father,  
made in God's image, and then to relate this to  
God as my heavenly Father. I use scripture  
throughout so as to set the ideas on a firm  
foundation.

## F a t h e r   G o d   d e l i g h t s i n   y o u

*The LORD your God is with you,  
He is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you,  
He will quiet you with his love,  
He will rejoice over you with singing.*  
*( Zephaniah 3 verse 17 )*

Come with me at night if you will into a nursery room. You hold a small baby who is about to drift off to sleep. The child looks straight and deeply into your eyes as you start to sing a gentle lullaby and rock back and forth. This moment is so special and intimate and close. Now - become that baby as Father God holds you in His arms and sings lullabies to you:

*You are more beautiful than Solomon  
More precious than his gold  
I made you higher than the angels  
Your beauty yet untold  
Look at the mountains  
Look at the trees  
Look at the birds of the air  
Feel the breeze  
Look at the oceans  
Fathom the seas  
You're more beautiful than these  
Beautiful  
More beautiful to me  
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Come now to that same room a few years later and a mother is putting her son to bed. He wants a story, and snuggles up to her as she reads words that bring comfort, or laughter, or wonder; there is a soothing in her voice and he is gradually lulled to sleep in a secure, safe and

cosy embrace; he is quietened in his soul and spirit by her love and warmth. Now; become that little child and listen to your Father God:

*I who made the sun  
And placed it in the heavens  
I who made the mighty winds to blow  
And the oceans to roar  
I who made the universe  
Unfurled it like a canvas  
I covered it with stars  
And signed it with my name  
I delight in you  
I sing over you with dancing  
Oh I delight in you  
I will dance over you with a song  
I delight in you  
The highest of all my creation  
I will quiet you with my love  
I will delight in you  
And will you dance for me  
And will you sing for me  
And will you let me see my hope in you  
And will you sing for me  
And will you dance for me  
And will you let me see  
Myself in you*

Or perhaps you can join me in a little side room in my house. I have sneaked in there to be quiet. My daughter is a very gifted piano player and

she begins to play Debussy's 'Au Claire de Lune'. She may cease to play if she knows I am listening; but for now I have stopped, I have put things aside and I am sitting, taking in the beauty of her playing; these are precious moments for me and I don't wish for them to pass me by. There will perhaps come a time when she is no longer in the house and I no longer hear her playing.

Please know that Father God loves to spend time with you - He loves to watch you grow and move in the giftings He has placed in you; He rejoices over you. He is proud of you.

Again journey with me and I am with my 14 year-old son ski-ing. We get out of bed at 4:30 in the morning and drive 310 miles from Manchester to the Spittal of Glenshee in Scotland; we have checked the weather forecast and conditions will be very good for the purpose. Years of dry-slope ski-ing have whetted Ben's appetite for real snow and I am only too happy to oblige. Arrival at 10am, a day on the slopes and the long drive south which will see us home for 10:30 the same night, after 10 hours of driving! But I am only too glad to do this; it gives me a full day with my son, doing something he loves and that makes me happy too. It is so good to watch him hurtling down black runs with consummate ease,

full of life, looking the part. We have something to share, something to talk about. I go to sleep for a couple of hours during the afternoon, so that I will not be too drowsy on the drive home. A father with his son; 'Hey, he has some of his dad's talent for sport! Watch him go; that's my boy.

Remember when Jesus comes out of the water after His baptism and there is an audible voice from heaven which says; 'that's my boy' or words to that effect (Mark 1 verse 11 ) Listen to Father God's voice as He says to you:

*I am your Father  
You are my son ( daughter )  
I made you special  
Only one  
Put you together  
In your mother's womb  
You are so precious  
Only one  
And I would have you see  
Just what you mean to me*

*Made in my image the work of my hand  
You are magnificent  
Created by me  
The touch of my love  
And I would have you know  
How much I love you so*

*You are  
Wonderfully made  
You are a shining star in my sky  
You are a precious stone within my crown  
You're a reflection of your father's glory  
You are  
Wonderfully made*  
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This is real stuff from a Father God who loves his children. If there is no other purpose in writing this book, then it is to help you to understand how much God loves and cherishes you. But more than gaining an understanding, Paul prays in writing to the Ephesians ( Chapter 3 verses 18 ; 19 ) that we might know and experience the love of God; and even more that we would be filled with the fullness of that love. It is surely good to understand it, but how much better to be filled to overflowing with the experience of God's love !!

Finally in this journey we find ourselves in hospital. It is a maternity room and we have gone there with the news that my son and his wife have had their first child, a little boy. Everything is ok for all concerned and we await seeing our first grandson. The place has some memories for me. My wife was rushed into such a ward when our first - expected was 5 months

in the womb; things didn't work out for us as our little boy was still-born. One year later I remember dancing down the sodden streets of Oldham 'singing in the rain' at the birth of our beautiful Emma - it was 3am and all was well. 18 months later the experience was re-lived again as my son was born. And now as I walked with my wife and daughter into the hospital to see our new grandson I deferred to grandma having a hold first, whilst I looked at Theo; this in itself was wonderful but I will never forget what happened next; my son Ben picked up Theo, wrapped him up and brought him across to me, reaching out and handing him over with great pride and honour. This for me was a 'Simba moment' from the Lion King where the baby cub is held up before the crowds

My own son, handing over his son, to me his father

There are tears for me as I write this and remember that time, especially since our second grandchild was born yesterday. And it has helped me in part to see an amazing picture:

Father God sends Jesus who is the  
'first-born of many sons'.  
Jesus dies on the cross and the way is made



open to Father God for all believers.  
For Jesus says He is the Way to the Father,  
No-one comes to the Father except through Him  
And then I see Jesus pick me up in His arms  
and carry me to His Father.  
' Here is another one Father,' He says,  
as He hands me over.  
And Father looks upon me and smiles and laughs  
He holds me up for all the angels to rejoice;  
He says 'thank you' to His Son Jesus;  
And there is great rejoicing in heaven  
over another one  
who is brought into the family  
through the sacrificial love of His dear Son.

The love of earthly fathers for their children can be great. So Jesus asks the question "If that is how much you earthly fathers love your children, how much more do you think your Heavenly Father loves you ? " " If that is what imperfect love looks like, how do you think the perfect love of my Heavenly Father is going to be? "

I am sorry if you had a bad experience of parents, or fathers, or authority figures, and I am not being glib in my sharing. However, I believe in a Heavenly Father God who is able to do more than you can imagine or think to either redeem what was awful, or further enhance what was good. And I pray with St Paul that you might

grasp and understand, may come to know and experience, and that you might be filled to overflowing with the fullness of God's love

Father God says "You can  
trust me"

*The LORD appeared to us in the past saying  
I have loved you with an everlasting love  
I have drawn you with loving-kindness  
(Jeremiah 31 verse 3)*

In our youth groups over the years at some point we will do a 'trust' activity which I'm sure many of you have done or at least seen. They split into twos and one person stands behind their partner but both facing the same way. The one in front extends their arms fully to the side and is then asked to fall backwards into the arms of the other person without taking a step back. We do talk about the dangers of falling onto your coccyx and usually demonstrate ourselves. It is quite something to feel trust and to feel trusted and makes an important point about our heavenly Dad. I used to love taking my children to the swimming baths and enjoying them jumping into the water from the side, as I moved gradually further and further away. They themselves would jump and be caught so many times that in the end they felt able to do it

without help.

I recount the story below to try to show what an exhilarating and joyful life it can be when we trust God:

*Through the Father's Love cds I have made lots of friends around the world. One important place for me is Holland, and I recount just one experience there in 2009.*

*Close to Den Haag is the seaside resort of Scheveningen and I went to stay with my friends and their son. We all went onto the sea front for breakfast and enjoyed a great time. We walked and talked together and separately on the walk there, and due to our close friendship we put our arms around each others' waists as we walked.*

*Now I am a fairly squat and stocky 5 ft 6 inches, whilst both these guys are over 6 ft tall. So it was my expectation that as we walked together we would not 'fit' – you know, when you walk with someone and their stride is 'out of sync' with yours and instead of gliding along together, you jolt one another, and cannot seem to make the right adjustments.*

*Well, this didn't happen and it was quite remarkable to me that we did have a synchronicity – in fact so good was the 'sync' that I suggested on the way back home that I close my eyes and my friend should just guide*

*me as though I were blind.*

*In this way I would place my trust in him and put my well-being into his hands.*

*Having closed my eyes I was suddenly aware of how good it felt to do this and to know I could fully trust this person beside me to be my guide.*

*In fact it was so good I asked if we could speed up a little and not be so cautious, and this felt even better, until in the end we started to run.*

*The exhilaration of the running was amazing and not once did I feel to open my eyes.*

*That night at their fellowship meeting I shared the story and ended up running around church with my partner in the same way, then asked people to have a go themselves.*

Father God encourages us to place our trust in Him as we walk with Him, to know that He will be a caring and perfect guide and that we will have nothing to fear with Him at our side.

He wants us to get really close so that we can be 'in sync' with Him.

When we do it is an exhilarating and full life.

But then Jesus did say He had come to give us Life in all its fullness, so why should we be surprised!

## He loves us because God is love

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for  
us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in  
God and God in him*

(1 John 4 verse 16)

I have heard a number of times now ( so it  
wasn't my idea ! ) that no matter what you do it  
is not going to make God love you less; and no  
matter what you do you cannot make God love  
you more - because God is love.

When I heard this teaching I coined a phrase that  
helps me - 'Rain is wet'

No matter what we do rain will continue to have  
that property. If you go out in the rain without  
an umbrella, you are going to get wet and you  
can't really do anything about that. Similarly,  
'the sun is hot '; and if you go out in the heat of  
the sun without protection you are going to get  
sunburnt. So 'God is love' ; it is His property to  
love, and if you choose to come under the  
'shower' of His love then you are going to get  
loved and it is going to change your state. Under  
the influence of the rain you become wet; in the  
light of God's love I believe we become more  
loved and as a consequence more loving.

The Bible says that what you worship and gaze

upon is what you will become (Psalm 115 verse 8). So if you gaze upon and love your heavenly Father you will become more like Him. The more we worship Him the more we will be like Him. My experience suggests to me that even owners start to look like their dogs! This song from 1995 tells of how much Father loves us:

*I love you as the day that follows night  
I love you like the morning sun so bright  
I love you as the water fills the sea  
My love for you will flow eternally  
I love you as a father loves a son  
I love you like a new love just begun  
I love you as a mother loves her child  
I'll love you now and 'til the end of time*

The song also invites you to receive His amazing love :

*And will you take my love  
And hold it in your arms  
And never break my love  
Receive it like a child  
And not forsake my love  
Believing for a new life every day  
And will you have my heart  
And hold it oh so close  
And never ever part  
Accept the gift I offer*

*With an open heart  
Together we will walk along the way*

Good Fathers want to bless  
their children

*How gladly I would treat you  
Like sons  
And give you a desirable land  
The most beautiful inheritance.....  
(Jeremiah 3 verse 19)*

I want to really bless my children and the Bible tells me that God is a Father who loves to do the same.

I do not really want to wait until I die before giving them financial inheritance.

I want them to be blessed by me now in my life-time so I can see them prosper.

I don't want to give them everything and spoil them, not allowing them to work for and sacrifice for things, but neither do I wish to just leave them to it.

And the blessings I want to give are more than financial - I wish them to grow, develop and be nurtured into maturity as I share experiences, skills, and love with them. I tried to capture God's heart as a Father by writing:

*I am your father*

*You'll not want for anything  
All that I am and have is yours  
Holding back nothing of the love I have for you  
Beautiful one*

*I am your father  
And the blessings of this life  
I would desire to give to you  
Offering everything of what I have in store  
Beautiful one*

*I prepare a table before you  
In the presence of your enemies  
I anoint your head with oil  
'Til your cup overflows  
Surely goodness and mercy will attend you  
All the days of your life  
And you will dwell  
In your Father's house forever*

*© john 2008*

Thank you Father that Your desire is to lavish  
Your great love upon me, to give to me, to teach  
me, to bless me abundantly.

### A father's blessings to His children

*Recently, I was struck by an event within my  
wife's side of the family that touched and spoke  
deeply to me about this whole subject of fathers*



*giving their blessings. The Bible speaks often and clearly of how important this was and is in Jewish culture.*

*My father-in law, Geoffrey, died a few years ago as a much respected and well-loved member of the local community. In his time he had been Council Chairman, a local councillor, and was at the forefront of an organisation which raises thousands of pounds for local and international charities – some of their shelters were the first to be erected in Haiti following the recent earthquake.*

*Geoffrey had been a farmer for most of his working life and sported two large, knotted and gnarled hands, which bore the marks and scars of many years of hard graft in all weathers. Cows have to be milked twice a day for 365 days of the year, and having 80 ‘milkers’ on the farm, alongside 4 milk rounds, certainly kept him busy. He enjoyed three daughters and two sons from his marriage to Madge, and whilst the girls married and moved away from the farm, the two boys stayed around and quickly turned their skills and gifts to all matters relating to farming life. One seems to love tractors and machinery, whilst the other likes the animals.*

*In these times, in the UK, agriculture has come under certain regulations that have destroyed much of a farmer’s means of sustainability, which has in turn seen many of them give up*

*something that has been their life and in the family for generations. 'Diversification' is one way that some of them have been able to survive – it is a shame it has to be that way, but they are a breed that know hardship and hard work, and many will find ways to earn a living.*

*So when it was mooted at national level that there were to be farm 'Open Days' for communities to be able to visit their local farms, then the family, including my wife, pitched in with ideas and ways for it to be an attraction – there would have to be a 'clean-up'; I would be called upon to take photographs of animals and put interesting information on them around and about ; some different animals like alpacas would be introduced for the day; they would create a shop and sell meat, milk, cream, eggs, and refreshments; they would complete a treasure trail that would take people around the farm; obviously people would be able to see and touch the animals; perhaps some rides on a tractor etc.*

*So the day came and 600 people from the locality walked through the gates. Some families said it was the best day's outing they had had with their children for a very long time and they hadn't even had to get in the car. They all looked forward to a repeat next year.*

*Well, who did I think of on that day?*

*Yes I thought about Geoffrey.*

*He would have been so proud and happy to have been there. Proud to see his children doing well and continuing the work he had begun years earlier; proud to feel that hard work had paid dividends, proud to be of service to the community, and of continuing to play an important role in serving local people. He has passed on a legacy; a legacy that has gone beyond his years on this planet. Also his children have entered into the blessings of their father!*

We are told in the Bible that there are works that Father God has prepared for us since the beginning of time that we might walk in them. How pleased God must be when we do walk in them. He wants to bless us with a rich inheritance, and to have the pleasure of seeing us enter in.

Fathers want to bless their children in many different ways, and they take great pleasure when their children are also a blessing to them.

Good fathers want to  
embrace and  
cherish their children

*..How often I have longed  
To gather your children together*

*As a hen gathers her chicks  
Under her wings  
But you were not willing  
( Matthew 23 verse 37 )*

I love to touch and hold and hug and cuddle my children and grandchildren. The Bible tells me of a Father God who wants to embrace us and pour out His love on us.

I wrote the song *Try Running* based on a well-known picture that is repeated in all cultures and countries across the world.

*A child stands on the beach or in the park some distance away from her father. He has arms open wide and a fully welcoming expression on his face that says for her to run to him and he will catch her. She sets off and there is excitement and the air is full of joy and laughter and anticipation. As she arrives at her father, mirroring his physical openness, she flings herself into his arms and he in turn swings her around, holds her close, kisses her on the cheeks and hugs her. It is such fun, and so the whole thing is repeated several times. In this picture we have trust and friendship and openness and the joy of strong bonds and relationship.*

*And I'll remember you  
I'll never let you go  
Your name is written on my hand*

*Try running as fast as you can  
Into my open arms*

Now put God the Father into all of the above and you will see how He beckons you to just run into His open arms and be embraced and loved by Him. Remember this is how Jesus depicts His Father in the story of the Prodigal Son?

*And then recently I got a similar picture but this time it concerned the enemy of our souls, the Devil who likes to copy what God does but with a twist in the tale. He is a counterfeiter of the real stuff. He is described as being a wolf in sheep's clothing.*

*So when the scene above is played out he stands in the place of the Father and he beckons the child with open arms. He looks similar, he is smiling and he is encouraging but there is something in the child that knows it is not in fact her father. But, because the child has done this many times, the familiarity of the scene has built up trust and openness, and there is great joy to be had from this bonding, so this drives her on to acceptance and trust that this will be just the same. And so she runs, without the same abandon, and hesitantly at first, but it seems to be ok. Then at the last second, just as she is about to be picked up and twirled, the enemy steps aside and trips her, and she falls flat on her*

*face in the sand, as he kicks some in her face,  
laughing and be-littling her for her trust. And  
then sadly, the child has lost some of the  
openness and trust that had been built.*

*When her real father beckons her next time  
there are memories that stir and she is reticent  
about 'stepping out' - will He be the same, will it  
be like last time? - so instead she steps back. And  
her earthly father wonders what has happened  
to the little girl and her trust; and he backs off  
too so as not to pressurise her. And the beauty  
of their bonding, the reality and joy of their  
relationship, the intimacy of innocence is  
lessened and despoiled by this encounter. Eden  
is re-played and Paradise is lost.*

But, please know, that the reason God sent Jesus  
was so that the relationship between us and our  
Father in heaven could be fully restored; so that  
we could begin to see again what God is really  
like and how much He longs for us to be with  
Him in this way; and that our view of what He is  
really like is often tainted and tarnished by  
encounters with our enemy and our subsequent  
hurts and pain:

*Don't you know I'll wipe away your tears  
And that I will carry all your pain  
And you know that I'll be watching over you  
I'll cover all your shame  
Try running as fast as you can*

*Into my open arms*

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I remember my grandson coming into our house a while ago aged 19 months. It was a lovely experience, because he was very happy to be coming and had been building up to it. His dad brought him to the door and set him down on his feet as Theo came bursting through and into the kitchen where Chris and I were waiting. He shook from head to toe and began stamping his feet and calling loudly 'Hiya', beaming from ear to ear. He was unable to control his excitement at coming to see grandma and grandad; he was literally bursting with joy. I love the phrase - 'He was so excited, he couldn't contain himself' - it says so much.

Can you imagine if we told him to stop it, to stop being so silly; told him to calm down and stop getting so over-excited; told him to go outside and try coming in again but in a right and proper manner.

We can see what would happen. He would not do it again; he would come into the house looking very sheepish and unsure. He would quickly lose that bubbling excitement, that individuality of expression and joy. He would begin to feel strange about coming to see us at all - and with recurring re-buffs of this kind relationship and trust would be broken.

The enemy of our souls has a time-limited purpose to get us to lose our simple faith and trust in a God who is love. His aim is to take God's masterpieces that hang on the walls of 'God's Grace Gallery' , to tear them down, to destroy them, to counterfeit them, to spray graffiti on them or do whatever he can to 'ruin the picture'

Jesus, the lover of our souls, has an eternal purpose of re-presenting and restoring lost, spoiled and tainted images of God so we can begin to see again and trust again and 'step out' again.

God is a loving Father who longs to hold us in His arms and shower His perfect love upon us; to drive away our fears and to hold us secure in His arms of love and kindness; He longs to bless us and smile upon us and heal our wounds, and make us smile and know His peace and joy and love as He sings over us. When we are born of God His Holy Spirit comes to dwell within us. God's word says this :

*For you did not receive a spirit  
That makes you a slave again to fear  
But you received  
the Spirit of son-ship.  
And by him we cry,  
"Abba, Father."  
The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit*



*That we are God's children.*

(from Romans 8 verse 15 - 17 )

Good fathers just love their  
children no matter what

*For I know the plans I have for you  
Declares the Lord  
Plans to prosper you  
And not to harm you  
Plans to give you a hope and a  
future*

*( Jeremiah 29 verse  
11 NIV )*

At my grandson's dedication in church my son spoke to the congregation. The main gist of what he said was that Theo drew out so much love from him as a dad - more love than he thought he could ever have, a deep, deep love from a deep, deep well. And I think that if that is how it is for earthly fathers, then how much more must God love us, and sing over us and dance and rejoice over us; how much more must we gladden His heart.

A father writes to his daughter. He wants her to know how much he loves her. He wants to express that the love he has for her is not based on her performance, good or bad. That whatever

she does or does not do will not alter the fact that he loves her. So she does not need to try and atone for things she perceives were wrong, and she does not need to try hard to win his affections. He loves her because she is his child.

And this is from a position of imperfection. Jesus shows us that God is love and He feels the same way about us. It isn't that He discounts our faults or ignores our sins; it isn't that He does not discipline us, because any loving father does discipline his children; it's just that He is love and love covers a multitude of sins! ( 1 Peter 4 verse 8 )

*It isn't if you won or lost  
Or if you made the grade  
You may not even hit the mark  
You may not 'save the day'  
I love you, simply love you*

*It isn't what you've said or done  
Or if you 'played the lead'  
It isn't if you came in first  
Or helped fulfil my dreams  
I love you, simply love you  
For you are my child*

*And you may think you don't deserve my love  
And you may think that you don't measure up  
But you*

*Catch my heart  
And make me smile  
You make me glad  
That you're my child  
You make me laugh  
You make me cry  
And you're the apple  
Of my eye*

*And I love you  
I'm reaching for you  
Simply love you  
For you are my child  
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## How did Jesus portray His Father?

*How gladly I would treat you  
Like sons  
And give you a desirable land  
The most beautiful inheritance.....  
I thought you would call me Father  
And not turn away from me  
(Jeremiah 3 verse 19)*

When Jesus tells the story of the Prodigal Son it is in response to criticism from the teachers of

the law – the religious people of the day. As far as they were concerned, He was ignoring their laws about what you could eat and with whom you could eat without becoming ritually unclean, and they resented the ‘license and freedom’ he was displaying publicly.

Now I believe more has been written, preached or shared on this story than any other in the Bible. There are hundreds of ways of approaching and viewing it. So I choose to concentrate on just one angle:

The outrageous grace, love,  
joy and mercy of a father  
who loves his son and is so overjoyed at his return that He becomes undignified, lavishing heaps of favour on the one who was lost and has been found – the one who was dead , but is now alive !

This is song one on the first Father’s Love album:

*The son speaks:*

There’s too many ways to get down here  
Too many options to take  
Too many paths to destruction  
Only one good exit to take

Been on the road far too long now  
A long up-hill climb awaits me  
I think I’ll come to my senses

I'm about as low as can be

Father I'm broken before You  
Here let me stay at your feet  
Humbled and lost in the shadows  
Hoping our eyes will not meet

*The Father replies*

Welcome home, welcome home  
To the Father who loves you  
You're welcome home

Come to the feast  
Where the greatest are least  
And the last shall be first  
Come to the light  
Where the darkness of night  
Will be taken away  
Come to the place  
Where the hurt on your face  
Will be turned into peace  
Here in my kingdom, my kingdom of light  
Welcome home

Put a ring on his finger  
And shoes on his feet  
Let a party be given  
Rejoice with me  
He was lost but is found  
He's found his way home

To the Father who loves you

You're welcome home

*Let me tell you, (I believe Jesus is saying) what my Father is like. Let me show you how different He is from the dry, distant, legalistic judge and rule-giver that you have made Him. Let me tell you about:*

*A Good Shepherd who leaves the 99 and goes off in search of a lost sheep and when he finds it he throws it onto his back and returns home **rejoicing and glad**. And he calls his **friends** and neighbours together and asks them to come and join him in a big **celebration** -*

*Let me paint a picture for you that you may understand of what my Heavenly Father is like:  
Of a woman who loses a precious dowry coin and decides she will turn the house upside down in order to find it. In the end she does find the lost coin and is very **happy**. So she calls for her **friends** and neighbours to come around and join her in a big **knees-up** that she has found the lost coin*

*Let me show you what my Father is really like as I tell you this story :*

*Of a father whose son goes off wasting his inheritance money. This father waits and watches, hoping that his son will return. And*

*when he does the Father **runs** out to meet the son and among other things tells the servants to kill a calf and **throw a big party in celebration** that his son who was lost is now found.*

*So do you see the emphasis I am putting on this? ( says Jesus); My Father and I love eating and drinking with outcasts, because they were **lost** but are now **found** and there is great rejoicing in heaven over **one sinner** who repents*

<i>My Father is joyful</i>	<i>you have made him a finger- pointing critic</i>
<i>My Father is close</i>	<i>you have made Him distant</i>
<i>My Father oozes freedom</i>	<i>you make him like a bureaucratic rule- giver</i>
<i>My Father loves life</i>	<i>you have made Him deadly and dry and spiritless</i>
<i>My Father loves to party</i>	<i>you have made Him sad and dire and joyless</i>
<i>My Father longs for His children -</i>	<i>and you have made Him out to be an angry distant judge who only wants to 'beat</i>

*up His kids'*

*You have tried to make Him in your image  
But my Father and I long for the day when lost  
ones come to their senses and come home. And  
when they take even a small step towards home,  
my Father, who has been looking out and  
waiting, aching and longing, will gather up his  
skirts, leave everything to go running after them.  
My Father and I burst with an exuberance of  
joyful dancing over one sinner who repents.*

When we read the story of the Prodigal Son we  
are shown a Father who is :

slow to anger  
abounding in grace and love  
rich in mercy  
doting and loving of his sons  
soft and tender  
full of joy  
for us  
one who sees the good and the potential  
not judgmental or condemning  
full of grace and truth  
forgiving

So Jesus shows them the extravagance of God's  
love; the long-suffering of the loving father; the  
long-sighted hope of the longing heart ; the  
Father's heart that aches for his son to return;  
the outrageous, illogical and unreasonable grace



that oozes from his Father who says:  
Welcome Home  
What a wonderful Father! Let's jump into the  
river of His love.

## The joy of my Father God

*Surely goodness and mercy*

*Shall follow me*

*All the days of my life*

*And I shall dwell*

*In the*

*House of the Lord*

*Forever*

*(Psalm 23 verse 6)*

*Following the last section I would love to tell a story of something which happened in the Czech Republic in the mountains on the East of the country with my friends who are part of Angel Mountain Ministries. (see acknowledgments). It was an afternoon on one day in the middle of a week-long conference on 'Creative Worship'. On this afternoon there was a variety of workshops on offer ranging from a Guitar master-class, Flag-waving, choir singing etc. I always want to go to everything at these times and spend most of the time in a seminar wishing I was somewhere else and had chosen better! In such a fashion, I found myself as the only man in a female dominated 'Creative*

*Dance' session. Since the leader was Polish and could speak no English, it was perhaps going to be an interesting time. She was clearly an amazing dancer and I was afterwards told she had trained and danced in ballet companies at a very high level. More than this, however, she was full of Holy Spirit.*

*I did as well as I could and got through the afternoon without treading on too many toes as it were! What happened at the end of the session is what has stayed with me for the last ten years and has impacted my life often during that time.*

*After most of the group had dispersed I sat at the side of the room, reflecting on things that had happened. The teacher of the group was then joined by about 15 or so highly excited Polish friends; there were kisses and hugs and much animated movement and discussion. I felt somewhat like an interloper in the proceedings, but hung around long enough to see them go into a passionate and heated prayer session. Of course I did not understand any of it, but I know from scripture that the zeal of the Lord accomplishes much and there was certainly plenty of that around.*

*It was after about five minutes that it happened: The Polish dance teacher was encircled by the rest of her friends  
She took her place in the centre*

*And her friends began to clap in unison and then  
with different but complimentary rhythms  
They also made vocal noises and whoops and  
calls*

*It was very gipsy - like or how I would envisage  
that to be*

*At the same time she began to dance around in  
the middle of the circle*

*There was much joy and laughter and she was  
focused on heaven, beaming upwards*

*Then she began to twirl on the spot, circling  
around and around with a beautiful, effortless  
joy*

*The voices and clapping and laughter and joy  
crescendoed as she whirled*

*After about 50 or so ecstatic twirls (two of which  
would have left me reeling on the floor!) she  
slowed and invited friends in to join her*

*And to this day I 'get the picture': only now it is  
Jesus who is dancing*

I see my Jesus, His Father and Holy Spirit dancing  
- joyfully twirling and laughing and having fun.  
They are inviting me and others to join the  
dance.

*Would you like to?*

## The Lost Child the aching love in a father's heart

The following story concerns the day my wife and I lost our son Ben. I am sure many readers will have a similar story to tell and will also have experienced the searing pain of loss. As a Christian I believe I am made in the image of God – so the feelings I had when Ben was lost help me to understand how God must feel on losing His own children, the ones He created.

So yes I believe God the Father lost His children in Eden.

The ones He had made and walked with 'in the cool of the day' turned away from Him and caused His heart to break. Then Israel, despite His passion and love for this nation, continually turned its back on the One who longed to gather them under His wing like a mother hen.

Eventually, when the time was right, God sent His Son Jesus to provide the Way back to Him and to bring back His lost ones.

The following story spelled out for me what it meant to lose my child for only a short period. I cannot imagine the hurt and yearning of a parent whose loses their child forever; I do know

that with more and more broken marriages, the pain of one of the partners losing their children for real must be heart-rending. No wonder the story of the Prodigal, as told by Jesus, depicts a father who is watching and waiting for his son's return. This is what my Father is like, Jesus tells the people of His generation- and us.

*For the Son of Man  
Came to seek and to save  
What was lost*

( Luke 19 verse 10 )

*It was a beautiful day on our trip out to the beach at Perranporth in Cornwall. In my youth, summer holidays always meant a fortnight in this wonderful part of England with mum, dad and my brother. In those days we made the day-long journey south via a motor-bike-and-side-car. So it is natural that I would want to savour the same experiences with my own children- this time perhaps without the gruelling journey, sitting astride a foam- enhanced plank for 12 hours!*

*My wife had enjoyed only one week's family holiday to Llandudno, in her first ten years. She was very happy, therefore, to make the journey to Cornwall to enjoy special family time together. Tintagel, Mevagissey, Polzeath, Newquay, Falmouth, Truro and Looe were just a few of the places I would want to re-visit. They*

*held many fond memories for me of my childhood. I am also aware that memories can play tricks; I remember travelling to see my old Primary school for a quick look and being astonished at the miniscule size of the playground. We had played games of football, cricket, chase, tig, etc in an area the proverb tells us a cat could not be swung. However, Cornwall had lost none of it's charm, nor had it changed for me; Polzeath surfing beach was still as vast and inviting as ever; the rock pools as burgeoning with sea life; and just as my memory suggested, you could walk 200 yards into the sea with your surfboard and still find the water was only up to your knees. We'd been to Polzeath a few times in the holiday, so it was time to try somewhere different.*

*Perranporth beach is not as big, but very similar apart from a huge rock jutting out of the sand near the water. We quickly found a place to settle, to establish our territory with wind – breaks, and everything bar the 'kitchen sink' which accompanied us on our days out. Having done most of the usual 'beachy' activities, it was decided we would have a game of cricket. There wasn't much room on the crowded beach, so we had to find a space somewhere away from our camp. In this way we would be of as little annoyance as possible to the other holiday makers. I am told by my wife that I did the usual*

*‘dad’ thing of hitting the ball miles and everyone else chasing after it whilst I managed to clock up about 40 runs – I personally have no strong recollections of this, but she is an astute lady and I must bow to her superior knowledge!! I do, however, have an indelible memory for what happened next in the story.*

*We finished the game, packed up the wickets and gathered everything together to head back across the sand to our little patch. Everything that is, except Ben, our 2/3 year old son. Just like Mary and Joseph in the story of Jesus, when they travel three days and then discover he is not with them, we found that Ben was ‘missing’ only when we got back to our ‘camp on the beach’. This was some distance away from the cricket game, which had clearly absorbed all of us.*

*“I thought you had him” said Chris.*

*“And I thought he was with you” I replied.*

*The next half an hour was..... well, I am struggling to find adjectives to describe what it was..... as we went through every emotion, every logical and illogical thought possible within the range of human experience.*

*Calm, cool, collected and planned, soon turned into frantic, fearful, frenzied and irrational. Comments to people on a family- crowded beach like “have you seen a small 3 year boy with blonde hair?” are in hindsight not the most*

*likely to prove too helpful in the situation; but hey, after ten minutes we were not thinking straight. To make matters worse, the tide was coming in and around the huge rock, and of course small children can drown in 6 inches of water. The heart beat increased, the walking turned to jogging, the calm peripheral vision and organised thinking turned to jumping up and down on the spot; it was a bit like the guy in the TV programme 'Dad's Army' who moves every which way, shouting out "Don't panic ! ". Well we were panicking.*

*We found the life-guards who just seemed to be sitting around doing nothing but preen themselves, when they should be watching out for little guys who are lost – equally in hindsight that was our job in the first place.*

*I could continue with the story, but you get my drift I'm sure. One humorous part which we could not appreciate at the time, is when someone came over to us with a distraught 3 year old boy with blonde hair offering him to us with complete satisfaction at having found him—unfortunately it was not Ben ! Some other distraught parents will no doubt be re-telling at dinner parties the day their child was whisked away by a complete stranger and offered to another family on a holiday in Cornwall.*

*Well, after ½ an hour, one of the wonderful, amazing life-guards appeared with Ben. They*



*had found him, happily and blissfully unaware of his plight, toddling towards the car park at the top end of the beach.*

*For my part I cannot begin to imagine the distress when someone's child goes missing and cannot be found years later, or dies tragically and unexpectedly. Chris and I treasure our children and grandchildren.*

And of course Father God treasures us.

And Father God aches with a deep longing for the return of His children to Him.

I have just read and love the short book by Brennan Manning entitled "The Furious longing of God" <sup>6</sup> in which he unfurls for us that God aches for our return !

Jesus tells us that every hair of our head is numbered

He tells the story of the Good Shepherd, in which, because of His love, He will leave the 99 sheep that are fine, in order to go and search for the one that is lost.

The hymn writer Francis Rowley put this beautifully when he penned these words:

*I will sing the wondrous story  
Of the Christ who died for me,  
How He left His home in glory  
For the cross of Calvary.*

*I was lost, but Jesus found me,  
Found the sheep that went astray,  
Threw His loving arms around me,*

*Drew me back into His way. 7*

Thank you, Father God, that you love me with an everlasting love

Thank you, Father, that you will never let me go; that You will never leave me nor forsake me

Thank you that when I wander, You leave everything to find me and bring me home

Help me to understand just how much You love me; that in order to find me and bring me home You sent Jesus to search for me in an alien and dangerous land, where death was certain, but equally guaranteed would be my salvation!

Good fathers want the best  
for their children

*My dear child*

*I know what you need and I know you*

*sometimes worry about what you will eat and drink*

*Look at the birds of the air and the flowers of the field*

*They are covered with my glory and I provide for them*

*If I do this for the birds and flowers*

*How much more do you think*

*That I will provide for you*

*My child*

*It will be good for you to understand  
That I desire to bless you  
And give good gifts to you  
As you ask me I am ready to pour out rich  
blessings From heaven upon you  
Now what earthly father would give his child  
A stone if he asked for bread  
Or a snake if he asked for fish  
I am your heavenly Father  
And I long to bless you with good things*

*My precious one*

*I know that you are sometimes afraid  
And things become too much for you to bear  
You need a place of safety and security  
Know that my arms are big and open wide  
Run to me and I will hold you  
Run into my arms and I will enfold you  
Enwrap you and keep you close  
You are very precious to me  
All the hairs on your head have been numbered*

*My lovely*

*I see that you sometimes feel let down  
By the people around you  
And that you are hurt by the shifting  
circumstances  
Of this uncertain world*

*Come to me  
I am dependable and sure  
I am faithful and strong  
I will never leave you or forsake you  
I will never let you go  
You can fall back into my arms and trust me  
You will not awaken one day to find me gone  
I am faithful and true  
If I make a promise my 'yes' is 'yes'*

*Beautiful one  
Everyone needs to know that they belong  
And I have told you how much you mean to me  
You are my child, part of my family  
We are made for each other*

*Someone may have told you  
That there is a God shaped hole in each human  
That only I can fill  
And this is true  
But I tell you that there is a space in my heart  
that only You will fit into  
When you are 'in me' you belong, you fit  
No-one else can take this place within me  
You are unique, significant, special, only one*

*My little one  
Sometimes you feel shaky, weak and afraid  
And ready to give up  
Please know that I am the Father who*

*Comforts you  
I bring strength to you  
Sometimes you feel that  
'the stuffing has been ripped out of you'  
Well I come to fill you again  
And to give you substance in your inner being  
I come to re-assure you*

*To nurture you  
To care for you  
And tend you back to life  
I am your Father*

## Good fathers discipline their children

*... the Lord disciplines those he loves,  
as a father, the son he delights in*

Proverbs 13 verse 12 ( NIV )

Love is very often mis-represented, and some people struggle with the whole idea of laws, boundaries, discipline and punishment. In fact, I believe it is a mark of the age and our generally Godless society that parents have less and less moral ground on which to discipline their

children. The Bible is clear, however, that if we love our children there will be times when it is necessary to discipline them. The story below attempts to explain one reason why I feel God as loving Father does this:

*My wife exudes a natural aura that animals like. Even animals that would just walk straight past or ignore others see something in her and make contact. In particular I love the rapport she has with dogs, which immediately see her as worthy of their admiration and allegiance. There is something in her DNA that animals of any kind warm to. The same dog that would be 'eating out of her hand' would happily eat my hand or any part of me it could get at!*

*The following snippet concerns our lovely Beagle, Poppy, who died five years ago. Poppy came to us as a pup and until the age 15.*

*For those of you who know the Beagle as a breed, they are a hound and as such have a very keen sense of smell. They love to be out in the fields and constantly have their noses to the ground, making a zig-zag trail as they pick up different scents along the way. When taking her out walking as a puppy we were forced to keep her on the lead. If we allowed her to roam free, she would pick up the scent of a fox, a squirrel or a hare and wander off in search of prey. At these times her smell sense would increase in*

*intensity, whilst her hearing would drop to minus levels. She would trundle off in all directions, heedless of our shouts and calls to come back.*

*So she had to remain on the lead and it took quite some time for her to learn that no matter how much she pulled or strained to get away, we would not let her go.*

*Now why was this?*

*We had no desire to squash her natural instincts, inquisitiveness and enthusiasm. However if these instincts threatened her own, or others' safety.....*

*We had to cross a busy road to get to the fields, so she would have to negotiate this on returning with the risk of being run over. Also beagles are notorious for being constantly in search of any scraps of food they can find, and our allowing her freedom to go 'bin diving' was asking for trouble. She once found a way to empty the fridge, and having eaten a full chicken, a pound of butter and numerous other items she found places around the house to 'bury her booty'. For weeks we were finding chocolate and other items stashed behind cushions. By far the worst of these incidents was when she went to the farm pond and ran off with a fisherman's ground-bait. She ate it all, decided she felt thirsty, and drank volumes of water. We thought*

*she would explode as we watched her stomach get bigger and bigger by the second;*

*SO Poppy had to stay on the lead for her own good!*

*In time we found that not only did she stop straining on the leash, she walked with us and by our side. From then, taking away the lead, she would remain near or around and about us and return quite quickly if we called. Eventually, it was clear that she had no desire to wander off and just stayed with us; even sitting at the road-side and waiting for us before she would cross.*

Now whenever I think of this it puts me in mind of my relationship with my Heavenly Father.

He has no real desire to curb or crush my natural in-built enthusiasm and joi-de-vivre, but He knows that left to my own devices I will wander and stray and soon lose sight of Him or be deaf to His call. So He introduces the leash for me- this is for my safety and well-being and is in my best interests. His rules and commandments are there to help me 'toe the line'. If I move on from this and He finds that I am able to 'come to heel' more, then He will allow more room for manoeuvre; eventually Father's desire is that we should be free, but it is a freedom that is best 'learned and earned'. He wants us to love His presence and to walk with Him, yet knowing that we can run off and explore, with Him in sight of us, and us of Him. The basis of it all is loving two-



way, responsive relationship, with very little related to restrictive legalism or religious dominance:

*My wayward one  
There are times and seasons  
When you go astray  
You feel you have let me down  
And are too frightened and guilty to return  
You feel to have tarnished the family name  
And to be separate and distant from me*

*Well yes I hate sin  
And yes I hate evil  
They harm you  
And they cause us to be separated  
And that is why Jesus came  
He came to be the way back  
From this separation between us caused by sin  
I do not hate you  
I love you  
And nothing is going to be able to  
Separate you from the love I have for you*

*My son  
Some fathers will tell their children how to  
behave  
And yet their lives do not 'match up'  
I want you to know that I sent Jesus  
He is the exact representation of me*

*If you want to see me then look to Him  
He is the wonderful example you should follow  
He is the model of all you need to be  
He didn't just say how to live  
He lived what He said  
To the bitter-sweet end  
Not all those who say to me 'Lord Lord'  
Will enter my kingdom  
But those who love me and do my will*

*And so my dear one  
Please know that I will often challenge you  
I love you as you are  
But I love you too much to leave you as you are.  
As a good father I will discipline you, my child.  
I have high hopes for you  
And I have high desires for you  
I am passionate about the hopes and dreams  
I have for you  
And you will not enter into your destiny  
If you are disobedient to my call*

*But you will find me slow to anger  
This means I can get angry  
But it takes a while  
I would far rather you turn to me  
Because of my kindness  
I will be patient and kind  
Gentle and forgiving  
Merciful and understanding*

*Perhaps you think I have come to you  
As the great rule giver  
Wanting to close you in with regulations  
And leaving you no room to move  
Well I do ordain boundaries  
For your safety and  
The well-being of those around you  
But my desire for you is to live free  
And abundantly  
I desire to bring you  
Into a spacious place  
A place of life and health and joy and peace*

*And do you not think I know  
That you yearn to be cherished  
I placed that longing inside you  
And I am the Father who loves you  
I will cherish and hold you*

*Let me teach you and help you  
Discipline and correct you  
I am your Father, who loves you*

Good fathers are dependable  
Father God is my rock

*He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
Will rest in the shadow of the Almighty*

*I will say of the LORD  
He is my refuge and my fortress  
My God in whom I trust  
He will cover you with his feathers  
And under his wings you will find refuge  
His faithfulness will be  
Your shield and rampart  
( Psalm 91 from verse 1 – 4 )*

There are basic and foundational needs for all humans in this life, let me try a non-comprehensive list of just some of them: shelter food sleep safety security *stability* dependable relationships a sense of belonging identity COMFORT purpose **destiny** acceptance approval inspiration example discipline moral code and values affection *touch* kindness love stimulus help...

Now when I read Scripture I find it describes our heavenly Father as able to fulfil all of the above and even more than we can ask or imagine.

Scripture oozes with descriptions of God as providing for our surface and deepest needs if we will allow Him to. Good fathers want to do their best to provide for the needs of their children, and scripture tells us that God is a good

and loving Father

( I do not give the references but just ask that  
you read Psalms and each one of these  
descriptions can be found)

Father God

You are my provider

You are my refuge and strength

You are my fortress, my rock, the  
dependable one

You are faithful and true

You are my shelter

You are my hope, my present help

You are gentle and tender

You show me loving-kindness

You are the Lion of Judah, strong and  
powerful and protective

You are my shield and protector

You are my example, my teacher

You are faithful, in You I can trust

All my fountains of joy are in you

You are love

In You I belong

You place me in family

In You I have destiny and a purpose

You love to bless me

You are merciful and forgiving

You give me correction and discipline  
from a heart of love

You always forgive, always show mercy

You never leave me nor forsake me  
You are not selfish but sacrifice your life  
for me  
You are not irritable  
You hurt when I hurt  
You understand me  
You bring me into a spacious place - a  
place of potential and opportunity and  
freedom to grow  
You lift me up  
You reach down to save me  
You are a wise counsellor  
You are my comforter  
And this is eternal life - that we might  
KNOW you  
You are my Father - I am your child

I wrote the following song in 1995, re-vamping it  
and changing the tune for the album Father's  
love. It reflects much of the above:

*All the hairs on your head have been numbered  
Every step that you take has been trod  
Not a breath that you breathe goes unnoticed  
When the name of your Father Is God*

*Like a bird watches out for her young ones  
He will gather you under His wing  
You will know that you have His protection  
When the name of your Father is King*

*He will watch over you as you journey  
He will weep if you stumble or fall  
He will hear as you cry out for mercy  
For the name of your Father is All*

*He will never force you to obey Him  
A whisper should just be enough  
You will know that He cares beyond measure  
For the name of your Father is love*

## Good Fathers watch out for their children

*The LORD will lay bare his holy arm  
in the sight of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth will see  
the salvation of our God. **Isaiah 52:10 (NIV)***

Good earthly fathers are protective of their children. They watch out for them to make sure they are not harmed. I believe it should be unusual for fathers to step into their children's battles on their behalf; it is good for children to learn how best to cope with things themselves or to act on advice from parents. I remember our son coming home from school aged 5 and he was not looking his usual happy little self. We became concerned over a period of time and asked him what was wrong. He told us that a

particular child kept kicking him in the legs and hitting him in the back whilst on their way home from school. We spent a little time with Ben telling him what we thought should be his approach, and if that did not work, the next steps to take. He did take our advice, and things settled down to the extent that this boy stopped bullying him and is now one of Ben's best friends.

However sometimes it may be necessary for a parent to get involved first hand. The following story hopefully illustrates the point. It is fictional but as a teacher I have seen this played out many times:

*Jim was fully supportive of his 10 year old son Tom's desire to play on the local football team. Tom was not the best player by any means, but he had enough skill to be in a side, and his enthusiasm and commitment were beyond question. Jim had been down with Tom to check out the local team and had approached the managers. They invited Tom to a few training sessions which was the normal way to assess a boy's ability, overall fitness and attitude. Jim went to see a couple of the sessions and whilst he was happy that Tom was being given a chance, he had some issues with the trainer/manager's methods ; he seemed to think that the way to get the 'best ' out of the boys was to*



*shout a lot and also use belittling tactics and sarcasm to get them to perform – ah well, it takes all sorts and at least Tom was getting his chance, but Jim felt he would keep an eye on the situation.*

*After a few sessions, Tom came up proudly to his dad to say that he had been picked to play for the team on the following Saturday morning.*

*Jim had held back from buying the kit needed in case Tom did not get on the team; however, this news meant a full-scale and excited purchase of everything necessary. This was all part of the fun and Jim was very happy to enjoy it with his son – he remembered his own dad scrimping and saving to buy him his first pair of boots; long laces, hard leather, and hammer-in studs with the danger of bits of nail sticking in your feet as you ran !! Not like today's state of the art low-slung, stylish and sleek, trade-marked, logo-bearing fashion statements that his dad could never have afforded.*

*So it was a proud day when Tom took to the field wearing his new sky – blue and white striped shirt with the number 11 on the back. Black shorts, sky blue socks, shin pads and boots had been set out on the chair at the side of Tom's bed for three days awaiting this time; although Tom had had to try them on several times and check himself out in the mirror with a few action poses. Tom had hardly slept the night before but*

*no-one would have known as he took to the field, glancing side-ways and giving his dad an unostentatious wave and a half-smile as he ran onto the field in a line with the rest of the team. Jim couldn't have been happier – just seeing his own son in this way brought a lump to his throat and a tear to his eye . He knew Tom was not the best in the world and as such he did not place undue pressure on him to out- perform others, simply to do his best and try his hardest. Jim had seen enough parents who expressed disappointment in their children because they did not fulfil their exacting and perfectionist standards to be better than everyone else. For his part Jim was just happy to see his son out there, looking the part, having the opportunity and it made him so proud.*

*The game went well enough and Tom did some good darting runs down the wing and past the defenders. He would have to work harder on crossing the ball, and Jim thought he would take Tom down to the park to practice mid-week.*

*Unfortunately, the manager was less positive and encouraging in his attitude. In fact Jim's concerns that he used bullying tactics were being confirmed by the minute. Not only that, it seemed that the example being set by the coach had spread to some of the parents. They shouted abuse at their own youngsters if they made a mistake, and belittled any of the others*

*in the team who did the same. The poor lads on the opposing side came up for out and out ridicule and some very nasty comments, to such an extent that a fight between parents of opposing sides was a regular possibility.*

*So when, at 2-1 to the opposition, Tom missed an easy, open goal five minutes from time, he came in for rather a lot of verbal abuse. Not only did the coach put his head in his hands as if the end of the world was near, he continued to let Tom know his frustration to the end of the game. As Jim waited outside the changing rooms he overheard the coach swearing at the boys in the dressing room, and venting his frustration in all directions , including Tom, as part of his after- match talk.*

*When Tom finally came out of the dressing room, dragging his feet and feeling somewhat sheepish he was surprised not to find his dad waiting for him. He went to the car park and saw that the car was still there, but his dad was not to be seen; so he did as he had always been told and waited where his dad would have expected him to be.*

*As Tom approached the changing rooms he heard a raised angry voice and recognised it as being his dad's. He had not heard his dad raise his voice very often, so when he did it counted ! He was not one to listen in but could not help*

*overhearing what was being said. He had never heard his dad so angry, yet he knew he had not lost his temper – it was more like he was telling it as it was, but with some force. Tom knew the difference between a frustrated coach and an angry father. From what was being said it was clear that he was speaking to the coach. There were quite a few words spoken and if Tom could have heard them all he would have understood his father to be saying : “ ... I am very proud of my son, of his attitude, his commitment to the team and his enthusiasm and I will not have him spoken to in this way again by you or anyone else connected with this club..... Other parents may be fine with your approach but I am not...” When Jim came out of the coach’s room it was clear to Tom that only one person had been talking and that the man who usually had a lot to say was now speechless.*

Good fathers sometimes have to stand up for their children against bullies. The Scripture at the beginning of this section speaks of God baring His arm, or rolling His sleeves up. This means getting ready to fight. And have you noticed that Jesus never fought or got angry on His own behalf – it was always for the sake of others. In fact, when the soldiers came for Him with cudgels, He just gave Himself up, saying He had the power to lay down His life. But God hates

injustice, and wants us to have the same Spirit in us. Our God is an awesome God! Our dad is BIG and strong and powerful.

### Good fathers want to connect with their children

When I was in my 20's and 30's, I realised that I was sometimes so busy with work and commitments, I did not get to spend enough quality time with my children and family. By the time I noticed this and tried to do something about it, my children were teenagers and responded generally with a 'get a life dad' attitude. They had established interests and friends, and my idea to go off in a caravan for the odd weekend 'as a family' was met with some disdain. Thankfully, I am now surrounded by my children, spouses, foster children, grandchildren and church family, to the extent that going off for the odd weekend in a caravan 'on my own' seems a little more inviting! I tell the story below to show how wonderful it can be when we connect, and how wonderful and fulfilling real family and community can be. How God our Father wants to connect with us!

*It was just a normal day with my little grandson, who had yet to reach his second birthday. We*

*have been to the swimming baths a number of times before and he enjoys himself, seeming at home in the water. Grandad is ok with it too and the 'baby pool' is very inviting to both of us, due to a constant 25 degree temperature.*

*On this particular occasion the pool became even more inviting as there was nobody else in it. The only other person around was a life-guard, so we had the place to ourselves.*

*From the moment of entering the changing rooms Theo and I made a connection which was to last throughout the session and make it a special time for us. I got him out of his clothes and into his orange Bermudas which made him look cool. It turned out that later they would serve as a great buoyancy aid for him as they filled up with air, and made him look like the Michelin Man! As I changed he pottered around, looking into the lockers and placing my stuff in them or messing with the keys. It was great to see him having fun in this way, and he would turn around occasionally with a cheeky grin as if he thought he was on the edge of doing something naughty. Of course it is very hard for grandad to view anything he does as 'naughty' so he is able to get away with lots more than at home.*

*Once we were both ready, Theo and I did the usual of carefully manoeuvring around the freezing and uninviting shower that is supposed*

*to clean off the dirt and grime of the day on your way in. We then came into the big pool area where seemingly hundreds of schoolchildren were being allowed their free time to make as much noise as possible, and splash about like sparrows in a dish. I loved holding Theo's hand as he and I toddled along the side of the big pool to gain access to the warmer bit! Lots of wiry little 'Mowgli type' Pakistani children came to the side to say 'Ah' or 'hello'.*

*So proud grandad and little grandson made their toddling way to the 'baby pool'.*

*Children of this age are very much into repeating things that are fun and Theo is no exception. I had decided to ditch the armbands which seem to leave his face half in and half out of the water, actually increasing the chances of drowning. And so it began;*

*a half hour of laughter and fun between granddad and grandson. I pulled him along in the water at great speed which he loved; I bounced along on my 'haunches' with him on my knees singing 'horsy, horsy'. At one point in such a position Theo got hold of my head and began to push it under the water whilst I gurgled and blew bubbles and pretended to be drowning. He found the gurgling channel at the side of the pool and had to keep poking his fingers into the plug holes; he had to jump or slide into the water a hundred times because it was such*

*fun.....*

I believe Father God views me in the way that I  
view my grandson as depicted in this story  
He is for me      He loves me  
He loves to watch me grow and develop  
He made me and says that  
I am fearfully and wonderfully made  
I am unique and special in His eyes  
I make Him glad  
I bring Him joy  
Thank-you Father that I am so special and  
precious to You  
Thank-you that my life in You is abundant and  
joyful and eternal and significant.

### When fathers go missing

*Sing to God....*

*A father*

*To the fatherless*

*(Psalm 68 verse 5)*

Earlier, it was good to share about how Father God provides for our every need. Unfortunately, we live in a fatherless generation, where absent fathers are becoming a curse on the land.

*He will turn the hearts of the fathers*

*To their children*

*And the hearts of the children*



*To their fathers  
Or else I will come  
And strike the land  
With a curse*

*( Malachi 4 verse 6 )*

### *Stuart*

For 34 years I worked in education mainly within the context of 'deprived' areas. In the final 5 years of teaching, and training teachers, I worked with children who were 'in care', or vulnerable children who were at risk of exclusion or non-attendance at school. I came across many young people during this time, and almost without fail, they were the product of problems in the area of parenting, where key aspects of being properly nurtured were missing, or had been lacking in their formative years: I share just one indelible memory here.

*Details on 15 year-old Stuart (not his real name) landed on my desk one morning, and going through the file I seriously wondered if I should even consider working with him on my own! He had recently been with several Residential Care providers but had been excluded from each of them for threatening or violent behaviour; he was at present undergoing court proceedings for grievous bodily harm against a teacher. In all current reports it identified that no staff could be left on their own with him and he had to be supervised on a 2:1 basis. His most recent anger*

*outburst had been to take a chainsaw to the perimeter fence of the residential school grounds, and once again he was being 'asked to leave'. In the UK young people must receive state education by law until the age of 16. So my aim and role would be to meet up with him, develop relationship, work out an individualised programme and try to engage him in educational activities, hopefully not involving chainsaws!*

*In reading reports they revealed that a place in 'care ' had been requested for him by his dad when Stuart was 7 years old because of his uncontrollable outbursts, and 'off the wall' behaviour. Crucially, Stuart's mum and dad had split up when he was 6 years old and part of the problem was that he had not taken to the new partner that had come to live with them. So he had been in and out of the Care system for 8 years. He had tried one or two returns home, but they had continually broken down, and fights between father and son escalated.*

*I was under no illusions when I set up my first meeting with Stuart. I had 'done my homework', read all reports, and talked with previous establishments and their staff to identify possible triggers for his violence and also opportunities to engage with him. I had met up with his dad, and as far as I was concerned covered every possible angle.*

*From the outset of meeting with Stuart it became clear that I could throw most of the paperwork away! He was a fine young man, with high intelligence, very skilled in a number of areas, and great company. He could hold conversations on almost any topic and loved to talk about current affairs, the 60's, music, art, cars, healthy living, photography and a whole host of things including politics and religion ( yes he introduced the subjects, me not being allowed to) . I loaned him an electric guitar and amplifier that I had, as he had expressed real interest in Jimmy Hendrix and the Beatles ; he produced some beautiful art, based on Andy Warhol's work; we attended art galleries, and some of his top-class photographic work was displayed in a nationally - renowned photographer's exhibition; I was not phased or shocked when he spoke about the drug culture of the 60's and by his open comments about his own drug use; he chose and was thrilled to have a day out at a local horticultural centre enjoying photographing the gardens and Victorian orangeries and tropical plants. Since he was very interested and skilled in the area of car maintenance, I secured a place for him at a local garage as a mechanic and devised a Maths scheme for him based around invoices and VAT returns, measurements relating to car engines, tyre pressures etc. He allowed me to do*

*practical maths and English sessions with him, introducing him to some fine literature and poetry.*

*So what happened, and why did it work out?*

Well he craved relationship, real relationship; someone who was interested in him, someone to talk with, and laugh with; someone to share times together, who would enjoy being with him in a non-judgemental, non-authoritarian way; someone who would be like a loving father to him; who would recognise and value his individualism and intelligences.

Don't get me wrong - this young man was a nightmare in the confines of school and Residential Care provision no matter how good these establishments were. He hated being simply told what to do, and how to conform to their regimes and systems; he kicked against authority figures and institutionalism, and like many young people in this situation wanted everything on his terms! But why? Well my view is that he didn't want rules and regulations he wanted relationship; he wanted to know that he was accepted, that he was liked and loved and his point of view or way of life respected; that he had a purpose and a destiny, that he belonged. And I would venture to say he craved the relationship that had been denied him for most of his life - that of a consistently loving

father.

## *Section Two*

### *Getting to Know Father*

*This is eternal life  
That they may know You  
The only true God  
And Jesus Christ  
Whom You have sent*

*( John 17 verse 3 )*

There are many pictures of God in the Bible and many names given to Him which are descriptive of who He is. The pictures and names of God in Scripture help us in our imperfect understanding of what He is like; The Lord is my Shepherd, He is the Gardener, the Potter, my Shield, my Rock, the Lion of Judah, the Prince of Peace, my Comforter, and He is my Father, are just a few. In a sense God is in all these descriptions and yet beyond them. He's more than the sum of all of them but each one helps us in our understanding of Him; each one is helpful in getting to know Him

So it is good for us to understand more of God as we meditate on the picture that He is like a good father; to unwrap what that means, to paint in the background and fill in the details, to begin to 'flesh out ' the story and put meat on the bones. And this will be fun; but if it stops there it will be very much like enjoying a good film, looking at a beautiful painting in a gallery, or appreciating a good play at the theatre.

You see, the idea of God as Father is more than a picture, much more than a helpful image - it is crucially and wonderfully, fundamentally and overwhelmingly, vitally and amazingly, a positional statement of someone who believes in and responds to the call of His Son Jesus.

God is not just 'like a father to me' - He *'is* a

Father to me'

He does not just look upon me as if I were His child, He says - 'You are my child'.

I'll just write that again if I may:

My God  
You are not only  
Like a father to me  
You **are**  
My Father

And Father replies:

My son  
I do not just treat you  
Like a child  
You **are**  
My child

So there are two key aspects to the message

- studying the picture to gain understanding and
- gazing into the eyes of our heavenly Father because we are His son or daughter.

Studying the picture will help us in our grasping and understanding of truth, but if we don't move on to being in close relationship with our Father, to know Him and to be filled with the fullness of His love, I would suggest we just managed to read a nice book! Hopefully this is a 'nice read' but I would love for it to be more than that.

*Just to see you smile, makes my life  
worthwhile...*

I receive many e-mails from people who have listened to and been blessed by the 'Father's Love' music cds, and there are some that really stand out for me;

*Someone I know closely wrote to tell me he had received a message from a Christian friend he had not seen in a long time. She was in hospital and dying of cancer and had been given two weeks to live. He travelled over to see her and took a number of gifts with him. Among the gifts were the cds, 'Father's Love' and 'Father's Love 2'. Just before she died she sent him a card to say 'thank you' for the cds. She had listened to them over and over again as she neared death, plugging in her ear-phones and pressing the 'repeat' button. The message of how much Father God loves her had comforted her and the 'sting' of death was taken away; she said that she knew she was going 'home' to be with her heavenly Father.*

*Another person whom I did not know, wrote to me to tell me that her son was living at home and had mental problems of a psychotic nature. His involvement in drugs in early teenage had seriously affected his psyche and his parents*



*were now caring for him. His usual diet of music was loud 'rap' tunes from P Diddy, Two Pac and 50 Cent. So his mum was surprised one day when he asked to borrow the cd she was playing in the kitchen - the quiet, gentle, reflective music of 'Father's Love'. She had written to tell me that he repeatedly played the music in his bedroom for a week or so and then came down to speak with her. She was overwhelmed when he put his arms around her and told her that he now knew that God loves him.*

To both of these people God is a real Father who loves His children

Neither of these testimonies speaks of an impersonal God, way out there, distant and not interested in us. They reflect a deeply personal Father.

It is amazing how many people I meet within the Body of Christ who do not know what it means to be close to God, or who do not see God as a person who loves them and is to be loved. The message of a Heavenly Father's love, and what that really means, is a big a shock to them.

Equally the message of Father's Love is so welcome to many non-Christians that I meet who have had bad experiences of heavy handed religion and crave relationship that is real.

I pray that the words 'God the Father loves you' will become for you more than mere words, but

an astounding and amazing reality, as you read this book or listen to the music of the cds.

## *Getting to know Father*

*I will not leave you*

*As orphans*

*I will come to you*

(John 14 verse 18)

I share a wonderful story that unfolded in the last week:

*My foster daughter has been with my wife and I for over seven years now. As a 19 year old she has given permission for me to tell some of her story. And I tell it because yesterday she found her dad.*

*During most of her teenage years she has had only hazy and sketchy information on whom her father might be, where he might be living, if she had other half-siblings etc. Being very competent in all things 'face- book', she had done a trawl using all available options on the internet front, but had come up with nothing, other than a possible location and her dad's old high school. Social Services had joined in the search more recently and we had hired a private detective to do some general research also. All of these*

*'investigations' had drawn a blank.*

*I had been thrilled when Kathy ( not her real name ) had asked if she could call me 'dad' when she was around 16 years old. This is a massive privilege, especially with foster children, who understandably take a long time to adjust and to try and work out where and if they fit. It took a lot for Kathy to ask and there were tears and hugs and lots and lots of affirmation from me telling her she was just the sort of girl I would want for my daughter. But, of course, I'm not the real thing.*

*I had earlier been more thrilled than that when three weeks into the placement with us in 2002, she asked me at the dinner table if and how she could invite Jesus into her life. I remember asking her, "Do you want to do this before lunch or after?" and she was quick to say "Before ". I had the privilege of leading her to the Lord on that day, and she often says that irrespective of earthly things she has in her heavenly Father the best she could ever have hoped for.*

*Then, recently and 'out of nowhere', she was contacted with information via the internet, and within one day she had found a whole family, including her dad. Last night she spoke with him on the phone, as the first contact she had ever personally known with him in 19 years. She also texted and phoned and used every angle possible to communicate with family members*

*she didn't even know about; she rolled into bed at 1am but then awoke at 2am to make further contact as she was so excited.*

Now there is much I could share about this event but I will keep it at this for the purposes of this chapter: Kathy will spend, (indeed has already spent), many hours getting to know all about her dad; his looks, his health, his job, his wife, his children, his interests ... etc; photographs have been exchanged via the mobile phone and all kinds of information passed through. She wants, also, to share all the information about herself. This *information - gathering/sharing* is an important, exhilarating and exciting part of the process.

BUT she feels, and it is likely, that there is only one thing that is going to really satisfy her, and that is:

actually meeting her father

not just getting to know about her dad

but getting to know him personally and up-close

having a hug, touching, crying in each other's arms

developing a relationship with him that will last

growing together in love

And that is what Jesus says too ; don't just read about my Father thinking this is what will bring life to you; don't simply fill your head with

knowledge about Him, even though it is good to get to know about Him and to find out what He is like. But the only thing that will bring real satisfaction, real understanding, real peace, eternal and significant life, is when you grow closer in full and meaningful relationship with Him.

So the point of this book and this section:

It is good to know about Father God

But it is so much better and life - giving to really know Him as my Father and to know , know , know, that I am His child.

## *Section Three*

### *Getting to Know Father*

#### *In creation*

*May the first words on my mouth in the morning*

*Before You , be for You*

*And may the last words on my lips before  
sleeping*

*Be for You, be for You*

*And as we walk in the cool of the day*

*Be there Father, shine Your light*

*And as we talk in the watches of the evening*

*Be there with me*

*Through the night*

## Getting to know Father in creation

I just shared how someone who found their dad for the first time would feel. It would not be enough to just hear information about him, she would want to travel to the ends of the earth just to be with him, to spend precious moments just getting to know Him.

This and some of the following chapters share some moments that are special to me, when I have left the crowds and have spent precious moments with God ; Jesus did this often.

The following words were penned to express encounters with God in creation, moments of heightened awareness; times of peace; seasons of thankfulness; in the presence of my Father as He restores my soul and leads me beside still waters.

Each is a sort of photograph described in words, relishing my moments with Him, so I leave spaces between each picture that is captured: I hope you know also such times spent with Him and are able to recall those moments.

*I have watched the mountain waters  
Dancing freely down the streams  
Stood amidst the silence of the trees*

*And wandered through a cornfield  
Standing tall against the blue*

*And I've felt You there beside me  
With your love so beautiful*

*I have slept beneath the cover  
Of a starlit moonshine sky*

*Stood in field and meadow  
At the end of rainbow's light*

*And I've felt within white horses  
Of a strong and mighty sea*

*Like I feel inside Your beauty  
When You're standing here with me*

*I have soared above the storm-clouds  
Into glorious blinding light*

*Seen the mist upon the waters  
Hanging softly in the night*

*And I've gasped beneath the knife stab  
Of and icy waterfall*

*And I know You live within me  
The Creator of it all*

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## Finding healing as I meet with God in creation

This next song was written at a time when I was close to a nervous breakdown, and certainly suffering from nervous exhaustion. Phone calls and knocks on the door or demands on my time were causing me a lot of stress. All I needed to do was to get away and spend time on my own and with God. I am grateful to my wife Chris that she allowed me the space and time for healing as my few days in the beautiful Yorkshire Dales was respite for all, but a real time of God's healing for me;

*I feel the beauty of Your stillness  
I know that heaven's open wide  
Touched by the splendour of creation  
I want to stay here by Your side*

*I feel the morning sun upon me  
I know the blessings of Your peace  
I hear Your cool refreshing waters  
Oh may their music never cease*

*I know the beauty of Your stillness  
Bathed in the glory of Your light  
I feel Your mighty hand surround me  
Held in Your power and Your might*

*I stand in awe before you Father*

*I gaze in wonder at Your hand  
Lord I acknowledge here Your greatness  
Before Your majesty I stand*

*Give me a thankful spirit  
Give me a grateful heart  
Help me to know Your presence in every part  
Give me a sense of wonder  
Help me to worship You  
Lord Help me to adore  
And love You  
More and more @john 1996*

Praise be to the God and Father  
Of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Father of compassion  
And the God of all comfort,  
Who comforts us in all our troubles...  
( 2 Corinthians 1 verses 3- 4 (NIV)

Thank you Father, that as we spend time  
together in this way You restore my soul, You  
bring refreshing and healing  
Thank you Father that I find You in the things  
you have created, the physical landscape, the  
tiny child. You are reflected in Your Creation and  
the earth shows forth the glory of God.

## Another special time with Father God in creation

I share now a special moment spent with God towards the top of a mountain. We talk of 'mountain-top' experiences and this was certainly one for me – an awesome presence, where He got my attention. This was a key moment in my life and a strong impression was made. Once again it happened in the land of the Czech people - a very important place for me and my heavenly Father also.

*Breathe through the heats of our desire  
Thy coolness and Thy balm  
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire  
Speak through the earthquake wind and fire  
O still small voice of calm*

*It was to be a day I wouldn't forget. I had set off purposefully, alone and away from the conference crowds. I chose a steep ascent from almost the front doors of the busy, small, hotel which in winter would be bustling and steaming with skiers.*

*A quick getaway to be with God saw me climb almost vertically along the line of the ski lift, rusty and redundant in this autumnal pre-snow season. Steep climb indeed; I stopped regularly to catch my breath, bemoan how unfit I was, but*

*also to look back down the mountains from among the tall, straight pines to the ever-diminishing vista below. In relation to my need to get away, my journey was quick and soon accomplished.*

*All at once, I came upon a man-made wooden structure, a framework which in the height of the season would serve as a platform for skiers to prepare for their graded descents. It was unsophisticated but adequate for the task and I was happy to climb up the steps. I stood and looked around; into the trees and down the winch-wired path, leaning against the balustrade which formed the perimeter of the structure. This was not the mountain summit but was far enough and high enough for me; standing on my 'look-out post' amongst the trees - imagining I was 'on the run' from enemy soldiers; an escapee from captivity.*

*I then became aware of my tiredness, lay down on the solid decking, and slept. When I awoke I became aware of a change in the atmosphere; an awesome stillness, a heavy silence. As I looked out and into the thick pines I became acutely aware of my breathing and heartbeat - both of them, like myself, an intrusion on the scene. I stopped breathing and watched and waited. A deer would surely meander past at any moment, unaware of my presence. And of course I wanted it to; I wanted so much to be a*

*part of this whole forest-scape that I would melt and meld into it. And at such a time of heightened awareness and hyper-sensitivity I was expectant. Never before or since have I had such a weight and heavy mist of awe and wonder at God's creation.*

*Then I heard it.*

*A distant rustling of the wind, but localised, to the east and down in the valley maybe half a mile away; then another swirl but from a different location in the trees; then another and another until the swirls were becoming louder and closer and more frequent, but still individually distinguishable from each other; finally in one huge flurry of sound there seemed to be a gathering of all the small pockets of activity into one huge violent rushing wave of air that came up through the forest, over my head and gained momentum as it rushed west, causing every needle of every pine and the hairs on the back of my neck to bristle, and every branch to stir - then it was gone ; not even a breeze ; just stillness again.*

*And I saw in that moment God's stirring in the communities of the Czech people in small villages and fellowships, insignificant and localised rustlings; then at some point in His purposes, there would be a gathering together and a sweeping across the nation and beyond. I penned these words:*

Sovereign God I kneel before You  
Holy God I bow in honour  
Loving God I melt beneath Your gaze  
Here I wait in breathless wonder  
Waiting in the stillness, speak Lord

*Later, back in the hotel and as we worshipped,  
my English friend saw 10,000 angels in full  
armour hurtle down the mountain and set up  
camp in the valley below. The area became  
known as Angel Mountain, "*

I believe it is from the place of relationship  
That we are able to hear God's voice.  
Getting up close  
Seeking not only His hand to do things  
But also seeking His face  
That we might gaze upon His beauty.  
Such a place positions us to hear His soft whisper  
And the beating of His heart.  
Close to Him, we feel secure and safe  
And our hearts are more prepared  
To receive what He has to say.  
Scripture tells us that if we will draw close to  
Him  
Then He will draw close to us ( James 4 verse 8 ) .

## *Section Four*

### *Scriptures unfolded*

*The entrance of Your words  
Gives light  
It gives understanding  
To the simple.*

Psalm 119 verse 130  
(New King James Version)

*For God ( the Father ) so loved the world  
That he gave his one and only Son,  
That whoever believes in him  
Shall not perish but have eternal life.  
(John 3 verse 16 )*

*Now this is eternal life  
That they may know You  
The only true God  
And Jesus Christ  
Whom You have sent  
(John 17 verse 3)*

My child,  
Do you know what eternal life is  
Do you know what it is to experience the abundant  
life  
That Jesus my Son spoke of?

Well that is to be found in knowing me  
And knowing Him

Come to me, your Father,  
Through my Son  
He has made the way back to me  
He is the Way  
And as you do  
You will come to know me  
And to know my Son

Holy Spirit will help you  
He will show you things about us



To make your eyes grow wider  
Your heart explode with joy  
Your soul bubble with excitement  
Your feet to dance  
Your mind to race  
Your spirit to rise

He will reveal new understandings that will  
Make your faces shine  
Your hands shake  
Your body quiver  
That will make you laugh and cry  
And shout and sing  
And rest in a beauty of peace no other can give

And as Holy Spirit reveals more and more  
He will cause you to want to always be with us  
To be around us and in our presence  
To look and gaze upon us  
To adore us  
To worship us  
To love us  
To know us  
And this is eternal life

.....

*How great is the love  
The Father  
Has lavished upon us  
That we should be called  
Children of God*

*And that is what we are!*

(1 John chapter 3 verse 1)

Believe it, my child  
Keep telling it to yourself  
Telling your head 'til it gets to your heart  
Allowing My Holy Spirit to show you  
Who you are  
Son of God  
Daughter of God  
It will change your life and the way you see  
things  
To know that you are  
Born into a new heavenly family  
Born as a child of the King  
With God as your Father  
It will change your thinking  
The way you see yourself  
The way you see others  
The way you view Me  
The way you deal with circumstances  
I am the lifter of your head

It will give you strength to deal with  
People's assessments and judgments of you  
People will tell you all manner of things that will  
put you down  
Try to box you, categorise you,  
Minimise and criticise you  
Squash and pigeon – hole you

Hurt and reject you  
But you do not need to receive  
Their judgments  
Their put-you-downs  
You do not need to  
Take to heart the things they say  
Because  
You are  
A child of the king  
A son of the Most High God  
And the amazing thing is that  
As you grow in the strength and power  
Of knowing who you are  
As you become an 'assured – one'  
Some of the bullies stop bullying  
Some of the hurting people cease to want to  
hurt you  
And they turn to you  
For the strength they see in you  
They will come to Me because of who you are

And know  
That you are loved so much  
That you are cherished by me  
Feel that love lavished upon you  
Heaped and stored  
Then released and poured  
Eyes that gleam with joy as they look at you  
Hands that love to hold and protect you  
Arms that love to enfold and embrace you

For as you feel and know that love  
It will take away the fear  
My love will banish the hurt you feel  
My love will help you to turn away from  
The places you have previously turned for  
comfort  
The things that you have allowed to take my  
place  
And I will re—store the empty place  
And fill it with good things  
I will become your All-in-all

.....

*This is my Son, whom I love  
With him I am well pleased  
( Matthew 3 verse 17 )*

*Yet to all who received him ( Jesus)  
To those who believed in his name  
He gave the right to become  
Children of God  
Children born not of natural descent  
Nor of human decision  
Or a husband's will  
But born of God  
(John 1 verse 12 - 13)*

So you believed in My Son  
The One I sent  
You listened to Him  
You were drawn to Him  
You received Him  
You accepted Him  
You liked Him  
You love Him ?  
I don't blame you  
Isn't He amazing  
Isn't He beautiful ?  
He really is something else

You what ....?  
You find Him so loving  
You feel safe with Him  
He does things differently  
You find Him really gentle but really strong at  
the same time?  
I know what you mean

And He's really kind  
You're attracted to Him  
He makes you feel good and loved?  
Yes I can understand that

He's not like others  
He puts things unusually but somehow it's right  
The clever people are silenced by Him  
You love the way He always has the last word

They can't answer His questions?  
Hm... yes I know what you're saying

When He holds you it's so good, so real, so re-  
assuring  
He doesn't judge you  
But somehow you feel you want to change and  
get cleaned up  
When you're around Him

Yes He is absolutely wonderful

*But then I would say that wouldn't I...  
I'm His dad  
And I become your dad too if you accept my  
Son!*

.....

*How gladly I would treat you  
Like sons  
And give you a desirable land  
The most beautiful inheritance of any nation  
I thought you would call me 'Father'  
And not turn away from following me  
(Jeremiah 3 verse 19)*

Woops  
I thought I'd make you a lovely meal  
Something you'd really enjoy  
Hours of cooking and mixing the herbs and spices  
Lavish and joyful stirring of all the ingredients

A veritable feast  
A candle-lit table laid with the best cutlery  
The finest wine  
*But you didn't want it*

I got you that present I thought you'd love  
Wrapped it in the best paper I could find  
Finished it with a beautiful silk bow  
Presented it to you with love  
*But you tossed it aside*

I set up the room so we could be together  
Fluffed up the cushions  
Sorted the sofa  
Arranged the flowers  
Made it all cosy  
*But you had something else to do*

I smiled at you and said loving words  
I held out my hand to you  
I reached out to touch you  
But you turned away

I had everything ready  
I had such high hopes  
I offered myself to you  
I gave everything I had to you  
My most precious treasures  
*But you turned your face from me*

Strange how people can think that because I am God  
I don't have any feelings and cannot hurt  
That I dispassionately rule from a safe distance

Please know that I long for my children  
A father longing for those he lost  
I love so deeply it hurts

.....

*Surely goodness and mercy  
Shall follow me  
All the days of my life  
And I shall dwell  
In the  
House of the Lord  
Forever*

(Psalm 23 verse 6) New King James

You got it  
You understood it  
I am good – always good  
I am merciful – always merciful  
I am your Father  
I am your Protector  
I watch over you  
I am your guide  
Showing you the right paths to take  
I am your comforter  
I give you strength and courage  
I prepare good things for you  
I invite you to feast at my table  
I welcome you to my home  
Not just to visit but to stay  
You will like it when you live with me



And I live with you  
You will not want for anything  
You will be at peace  
With me you will find rest  
You will lie down  
You will not be afraid  
I will bring you into big open spaces  
No more confinement and imprisonment  
I will set you free  
I will restore you  
I will fill you with good things  
And these things will last forever  
I will always be with you  
I will always treasure you  
Always welcome you  
Always have a smile on my face  
When you are around

.....

*I will not leave you  
As orphans  
I will come to you  
(John 14 verse 18)*

*Sing to God.....  
A father  
To the fatherless  
(Psalm 68 verse 5)*

My heart is for you  
My desire is for you  
I yearn for you  
I see your loss  
I feel your pain  
I will come to you

I see your loneliness  
I see your striving  
You are so lost  
So vulnerable  
I cannot leave you  
I will come to you

I will be your Father  
I will hold you  
I will provide for you  
I will care for and nurture you  
I will not leave you as orphans  
I will come to you

.....

*As a father has compassion on his children,  
So the Lord has compassion  
On those who  
Fear him*

(Psalm 103 verse 13)

*Praise be to the God and Father  
Of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The Father of compassion  
And the God of all comfort,  
Who comforts us in all our troubles  
So that we can comfort those in any trouble  
With the comfort we ourselves have received  
From God.*

*( 2 Corinthians 1  
verses 3 - 4 (NIV)*

This is how it is meant to be  
Freely you receive from me  
Freely you give to others  
I show fatherly compassion to you  
You show compassion to those around you  
You receive comfort from me  
You give comfort to those you meet  
I am a Father who has compassion  
I am Your Father who comforts you  
And from the well of my love in you  
People will come to draw water  
And under the fountain of my joy in you  
They will be refreshed  
You will become a tree with big branches  
On which birds will make their nests  
And find shelter  
So come to me, my child  
Know my compassion  
Know my comfort  
Know my love

Rest in me  
Remain in me

.....

*For you did not receive a spirit  
That makes you a slave again to fear  
But you received the Spirit of son-ship.  
And by him we cry,  
"Abba, Father."  
The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit  
That we are God's children.  
(Romans 8 verse 15 - 16 )*

My child

Let me tell you of the elephant which had lived  
in a confining zoo for years, chained to a post,  
day after day with no freedom to move except in  
a small prescriptive circle. Then one day the  
authorities come and tell the harsh zoo keepers  
it is unfair to keep a majestic animal in such a  
way. So the chains are taken away – the  
elephant is free, free to move out and beyond,  
to explore and to roam.

But he continues to walk around in the circle.  
He remains within the restrictions of his  
confinement until gently coaxed and encouraged  
to know that he is free.

And so it can be with you, my child  
Let me coax you from the places of your fear and

into glorious freedom

As you believe in my Son and turn from your sin  
Holy Spirit comes to live within you  
You are set free from bondage and restriction  
And it is through Holy Spirit that you are able  
To call me 'Father'  
Through my beautiful, wonderful Holy Spirit that  
you begin to see  
And understand what it means to be my child

No longer slaves, bound and chained,  
imprisoned and afraid  
Closed in and restricted  
Living in fear of the future  
Slaves with no rights  
Servants of a hard master  
Slaves living without hope of anything better  
No inheritance  
Just the same drudgery of servitude  
The same confinement day after day

But know that you are free  
Free to run, and to explore the spacious place  
Chains cut  
Prison doors opened  
No more fear – only hope  
Children running free in the garden  
Sons and daughters, laughing and joyful, playing  
with their Father

With all the rights and inheritance of sonship

But I know that it will take time and help  
To get out of those 'slave – driven ways  
You will need help to walk in your freedom  
To move away from the restrictive circle of  
confinement  
So let my Holy Spirit, my gentle dove,  
Coax you from the confines of your  
imprisonments  
If I set you free  
You will be free indeed

.....

*Whenever though they turn to face God  
as Moses did  
God removes the veil and there they are  
Face-to-face  
They suddenly recognize that God is a living,  
personal presence Not a piece of chiselled stone  
And when God is personally present, a living  
Spirit,  
That old, constricting legislation  
Is recognized as obsolete  
We're free of it! All of us!  
Nothing between us and God,  
Our faces shining with the brightness of his face.  
And so we are transfigured much like the  
Messiah,*

*Our lives gradually  
Becoming brighter and more beautiful  
As God enters our lives  
And we become like him.*

( 2 Cor 3 verse 16 )

The Message

My Child

I want to hold you close  
And as you gaze upon me and worship me  
You will begin to reflect my glory  
Your face will begin to shine  
With the glory of heaven  
And you will become more like me

I am your Father

And as you learn to love me  
You will grow to resemble me  
And bear more of the family likeness  
More like my image

Listen to my Son Jesus whom I love.

He said

If you have seen me you have seen my Father  
I and my Father are One  
He and I are the same

In the beginning was the word (My Son)

And the word was with God

And the word was God

And if you will be a true son or daughter to me  
You also will be like me  
And be able to re-present me  
To the world

*Lord as I gaze on Your beauty  
Lord as I look in Your face  
Standing right here in Your presence  
I find peace  
Lord as I kneel here beside You  
Resting my head on Your knee  
Feeling the warmth of Your love  
Pouring out on me  
Oh I worship  
Resting in You  
You are my destiny  
I'm coming through  
The searching is over  
The striving has ceased  
And as I surrender  
I find peace*

.....

*Surely your God is  
The God of gods  
The Lord of kings and  
The revealer of mysteries  
(Daniel 2 .. 47 )*



I am your Father  
I love you with an everlasting love  
You are the apple of my eye  
I cradle you in my arms  
I look at you and my heart bursts with love

I see myself in you  
You reflect so much of who I am  
Yet I have so much more for you

I affirm you  
You are so precious to me  
You are so special

I sing to you  
I sing over you  
You are part of me  
Created by me for me  
In my image

I love to watch you grow into the fullness  
Of who you are meant to be  
Your mind and intellect  
Your emotions and heart  
Your personality and character  
Your exuberance and passion  
Your gentleness and kindness  
Your joy and life

Jesus is my sweet, first – born Son

And I love Him so much  
I am so pleased with Him  
He is my beloved  
And I have the same heart for you

When He came  
It was to show you what I am like  
And how much I love you

He comes as Master and Lord  
Saviour, Messiah and King  
As Teacher and the  
Redeeming Lamb  
Who takes away the sin of the world

And You will want to serve Him as Lord and  
Master  
You will desire to bow before Him as King  
You will marvel at His teaching  
You will recognise and come to Him  
As Saviour and Messiah  
And this is good ; very good  
I want you to listen to Him  
To honour and obey Him  
To serve and follow Him  
For He is my beloved Son

But please know too that  
He is Friend  
He is Bridegroom and Lover

He is the one who serves  
And as you come to know Him in this way  
You will feel the warmth of His love  
The gentle touch of His compassion  
You will know Him closer than a brother  
And His tenderness will lead you to repentance

In the same way  
I come to you as Creator  
As the Great I Am  
The Beginning and the End  
As Alpha and Omega  
As the God of Gods  
And the Lord of Lords  
Immortal, Eternal  
Infinitely wise  
Indeterminably beyond understanding  
Unfathomable and beyond comprehension  
Maker of the Universe  
But know also that I am

Father

Daddy

Abba

Papa

.....

*I will dwell in them  
And walk among them  
And I will be their God  
And they shall be my people  
And I will welcome you  
And I will be a Father to you  
And you shall be  
Sons and daughters to me  
Says the Lord Almighty*  
(2 Corinthians 6 verses 16 - 18)

Need I say more, my child ?

# Appendix 1

## Breaking the curse –

### Forgiveness

I am mindful that some people reading this material will have had abusive parents and find it hard to relate to God as loving Father. This short chapter is my small offering in the sometimes long and hard process of healing.

When Jesus died on the cross He broke the curse by taking it upon Himself. He spoke forgiveness over those at the scene and released them of responsibility.

Jesus says that if we are going to love God or be able to receive love from God, then we too have to forgive. He says that in order to get right with God we have to get our earthly relationships right first; this covers all earthly relationships, whether that is with fathers, mothers, brothers, enemies or anyone who may have hurt us, including ourselves !

If we cannot love those we have seen then we cannot love the One we have not seen.

*If anyone says –*

*I love God yet hates his brother*

*He is a liar*

*For anyone who does not love his brother*

*Whom he has seen cannot love God*

*Whom he has not seen  
( 1 John 4 19–21 NIV )*

Elsewhere ( in Matthew 5 verse 23) Jesus says that if we are going to worship God, and we find that there is an issue between us and a brother, then we should first go and settle the matter with our brother and then bring our gift to the altar.

So Jesus is unequivocal in saying that we need to get matters right in our earthly relationships in order to be on the right footing with God.

I do not think that the word ‘ brother’ means we can excuse ourselves from putting things right with our father ( or anyone else ) – I think the word is all- encompassing here.

*I once had the privilege of listening to a young woman speaker at a Soul Survivor summer gathering. She told about the sexual abuse she had received at the hands of her father from a very early age and how it had badly affected her throughout her childhood and adolescence. She was open about the bitterness, anger and her feelings of hatred towards him. The most telling part for me was when she explained that she felt she had been robbed of her childhood and that he owed her a huge debt in this regard – a debt that he could not re-pay.*

*When she came to Christ and in her Christian*

*walk prayed the Lord's Prayer, she said these words:*

*"forgive us our debts as we forgive those who have debts against us"*

*This hit home to her and she realised she had to forgive her earthly father for the wrongs he committed against her. She also realised that Jesus had paid the debt of her and his sin on the cross. Once again when Jesus gives the commandment to love our enemies and those who do wrong to us, He does not say it to curtail our freedom – far from it; His words and life are designed to set us free.*

*She saw that releasing her father from the debt actually set her free as well as him. In the end she was able to say to her father that he owed her nothing. Instead of dragging him around with her for the rest of her life, she was able to release the debt, to untie the rope and let him go. Instead of clinging onto bitterness and hatred and hurt she was able to let go. She spoke of the freedom she found in Christ.*

When I attended a Fatherheart School A (ref) one of the most poignant things for me was writing a letter to my earthly father. There were things for which I needed to say "Sorry ". Equally there were things for which I needed to forgive him. Writing a letter was a good way to clear the

air and I heard many testimonies of healed relationships that ensued from this. Some people actually sent their letters.

I am not being glib and saying this is easy stuff to deal with. However, I am equally sure that continuing to live with the hurt and pain is as much a life choice as dealing with it.

Please consider this carefully, and remember that God is your Father and He wants the best for you. He will help you through this.



# Appendix 2

## The albums

### Father's Love 1 and 2

Speak to one another  
With psalms, hymns  
And spiritual songs  
Sing and make music  
In your heart  
To the Lord,

*(Ephesians 5 verse 19 NIV)*

In 2005 my friend Jeff Scaldwell came to our small fellowship in Rochdale to share over a weekend on the Fatherheart of God. He heads up "Fatherheart Europe" and travels extensively sharing this wonderful revelation. I was to lead worship and it turned out to be a pivotal time in my life.

At the end of most of the talks I found that God had put songs on my heart which fit the themes Jeff shared about. These were songs I had never sung in public before and many had been written up to ten years previously. I checked that Jeff was ok for me to sing one or two ministry songs to allow people to 'soak' in the message and bathe in the revelation. He was fine with this and it is quite normal for Jeff that when he does

conferences or schools, he encourages people to simply rest in Father's arms as Christian 'soaking' music is played.

As the weekend progressed Jeff told me that if I could make cds of the songs I had played he would happily sell them and use them across Europe in his travels.

This was just the encouragement I needed. I had been writing songs and making music to the Lord for years but it had only been for personal interest, to serve the Body of Christ and as fun. So to have a project , a purpose and a theme for writing was most inspiring to me as a songwriter.

So off to Andy Green's studio and within four months *Father's Love – the album* was completed, just in time for a week – long school that Jeff was to do in Rochdale.

It seems that God has had His hand on this album from the start. There was an obvious theme, a waiting audience, a clear choice of songs and a speed of recording that cut down on initial costs. There is a flow to the songs that seemed to just happen in the studio. Even post – production matters have gone really smoothly. I have never openly marketed the albums or pushed for sales and yet they are being played in over 35 different countries. Nor have I worked out who would like the music, but am finding that they not only accompany babies to sleep,

but appeal to all ages across all spectrums of society; from audiences in Asia, Africa, North and South America to listeners across Europe.

After one year people who had bought or received *'Father's Love'* were asking if there was another album on the way – so 18 months ago the process started again and *Father's Love 2* was released.

Currently the albums are available from:

[john.nuttall3@ntlworld.com](mailto:john.nuttall3@ntlworld.com)( multiple copies )

[www.crossrhythms.co.uk](http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk)

## A c k n o w l e d g m e n t s

Angel Mountain Ministries - John de Jong  
[www.angelmountain.net](http://www.angelmountain.net)

Bible Gateway -- great web-site for different translations and looking up references. All references in this book are written from this web-site using NIV, New King James and The Message. Copyright and permission details available here and pending:  
[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Jack Frost – author of two great books that have really helped me “ The Father’s Embrace”  
and “ Spiritual Slavery to Spiritual Sonship “

Wm Paul Young – author of “ The Shack”  
Brennan Manning – author “The Furious Longing of God “

Jeff and Sylvia Scaldwell – Leaders of Fatherheart Europe  
[www.fatherhearteurope.com](http://www.fatherhearteurope.com)

James and Denise Jordan – world leaders of fatherheart  
[www.fatherheart.net](http://www.fatherheart.net)

Crossrhythms Christian Radio – Stoke on Trent  
[www.crossrhythms.co.uk](http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk)

Soul Survivor – Christian Youth Organisation  
[www.soulsurvivor.com](http://www.soulsurvivor.com)

Andy and Wendy Green – Music Producers and  
Artists  
[www.cornerhouseproductions](http://www.cornerhouseproductions)

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