

The Small Group Sheet is a little bit different this week, because we didn't write it. But this study enhances what we learned today from #TYMK16.

One of the great human quests throughout history has been trying to find the right name to use for God.

What kind of word can you use to describe the all-powerful, all-knowing, just, and holy Sovereign of the universe?

In the Bible God is given many names. He is called: Yahweh (Lord), I AM WHO I AM, Adonai (Lord), Elohim (The God of the Hosts), and El Shaddai (God Almighty), just to name a few. Each of these names captures a portion of God's character. We look for images and adjectives that could express His greatness. Rock, shield, fortress, and king are a few efforts to define the indefinable majesty of our God.

Every generation seeks to find the right words to express their worship of the living God. Some time ago our kids were in a group singing, "Our God Is an Awesome God." The song leaders had the kids replace the word awesome with their adjective of choice, any word that would help them describe God. Our kids came home singing, "Our God is a tubular God." We were not entirely sure what this meant and we knew that some people might not find this wording appropriately reverent, but to our kids, tubular expressed the awe, wonder, and joy they felt for God.

One day, almost two thousand years ago, a Jewish carpenter used a word that no one had ever thought of using for God. He used an old word, a nursery word, a word that little infants would use to address their father.

The word was Abba.

This was a very tender and intimate word, kind of like daddy. It was often the first word a little Jewish boy or girl would speak, because it was easy to pronounce. One day Jesus turned His eyes heavenward and addressed God as His Abba. In all of recorded history, no one had ever thought of speaking to God in this way. Jesus spoke this word for the very first time. He lived His life in a new way—as Abba's child. So Abba was often on His lips and always on His heart.

- 1. What is one name for God that you like to use, and why does it help express your heart toward God?**
- 2. What is one adjective you like to use to express the character and nature of God? How have you experienced this attribute of God?**

Knowing and Being Known Read 1 John 2:28–3:3 2. John points to one of the most extravagant gifts God has given—the right for us to become children of God (3:1)!

- 3. What does it mean to see yourself as a child of God?**

Abba Is Enough Jesus had a profound sense of what it meant to be Abba's child. He modeled for us what it means to live our lives as children of God.

One day Satan came to Jesus and made a series of offers. "Why don't You turn these stones into bread? You will be a satisfied man. Why don't You throw yourself down from a high place? The angels will protect You, and You will be an impressive man. Why don't You fall down and worship me? I will give You governments and multinational corporations, and You will be a success." The Devil seemed to be offering everything a person could want and more!

Jesus said no to it all! Jesus lived with a deep and profound sense that He was Abba's child. And for Jesus, that was enough. He didn't need to be impressive, successful, or famous. Jesus had a satisfaction that the Devil could never understand. It was like Jesus was saying to the Enemy, "What you are offering does not begin to touch the value of what I have as Abba's child." The things the Devil offered were like trash compared to what Jesus had as Abba's child.

The same is true today.

All the Enemy might offer you or me, no matter how good it might look at that moment, is like garbage compared to what we receive as a child of God. **You Are Abba's Child** Not only did Jesus see Himself as Abba's child, but He said that we can call God by this same intimate name. You and I, ordinary people, can know that God is a Father who is tenderly devoted to us.

Jesus said, "You can be Abba's child." Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:14–17)

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:4–7)

#### **4. As a follower of Christ, God is your Abba. How does this reality impact how you see one of the following:**

- God
- Yourself
- Other followers of Christ
- Seekers

5. Describe a time when you felt a deep sense of connectedness with God as your Abba.

6. What kind of attitude should a child of God have when he or she draws near to the Father (1 John 2:28 and Romans 8:14–17)? How does this reflect on the way you approach God?

7. What are some of the contrasts between being a hired servant and a beloved child? How are you growing in your understanding of yourself as God's beloved son or daughter?

The Father Is Fond of You!

There was a priest from Detroit named Edward Farrel who went on his two-week summer vacation to Ireland. His one living uncle was about to celebrate his eightieth birthday. On the great day the priest and his uncle got up before dawn and dressed in silence. They took a walk along the shores of Lake Killarney. Standing side by side, with not a word exchanged, and staring straight at the rising sun, suddenly the uncle turned and went skipping down the road. He was radiant, beaming, smiling from ear to ear. His nephew said, "Uncle Shamis, you really look happy." "I am lad." "Want to tell me why?" His eighty-year-old uncle replied, "Yes, you see, me Abba is very fond of me." (—Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child* (NavPress, 1994) )

**7. If God, your Abba, could sit face-to-face with you right now, what words of love would He speak to you? Read 1 John 5:18–21**

**8. As John draws to the close of this letter, he draws out some implications for children of God. What does John teach about your relationship to one of the following:**

- Sin
- The Devil
- God

**9. If Abba is Father to all followers of Christ, this makes us brothers and sisters. How have you experienced family love among the community of God's people?**

**10. As Abba's child, what is one area of sin the Father is calling you to leave behind as you follow Him? How can your small group members encourage and challenge you to surrender this area of sin to the Father's hands?**

**11. Describe a time when you experienced God's protective fatherly hand keeping you safe.**

**Celebrating and Being Celebrated As Abba, God has done so much for each of us.**

**Take time to pray** together as a small group and celebrate some of the things God has done for you. Celebrate His fatherly provision, protection, and discipline. Also, praise Him for giving you His name and calling you His own. You might also want to give thanks for the inheritance you have as His heir. What we have today does not begin to compare with all that the Father has in store for us! Celebrate His goodness. Loving and Being Loved If God is our Abba, our loving Father, then we are brothers and sisters with all followers of Christ. We need to beware of petty sibling rivalries and anything that might cause strife and division in the family.

If you have a strained relationship with another follower of Christ, tell your small group about it. You don't need to use a name, only the situation. You might want to talk about this with only one or two members, or the whole group. Invite them to pray for you and to keep you accountable to seek restoration and healing in this relationship. Seek to restore love where it

has been lost or strained. Serving and Being Served Commit to serve other followers of Christ by reminding them that they are Abba's children. Write a note or send an e-mail with the express intention of heightening their awareness that they are God's beloved children. You might want to include the Romans 8 and Galatians 4 passages. Commit as a group to lavish other Christ followers with reminders of His fatherly love.