

ABBA

The Names of God series #3

by Bill Aumack

Great Sabbath to be here, amen. We're in our series, The Names of God. This is week three. Remember, what name did we talk about the first week? Yahweh and Jehovah, right? A name so holy that they wouldn't say it or write it down. Last week we talked about I Am. When Moses asked God, what's your name? He says, I Am. The ultimate flex. All right, today we're gonna be talking about Abba.

Now how many of you know what Abba means? Raise your hands. About half of us. What do you think Abba means? (Daddy) No. We got some unlearning to do this morning. I thought so too. I thought that too, till I started doing my research. So we got some unlearning to do this morning.

But before we get there, sometimes we struggle with the concept of God as our father. And sometimes that's because our earthly fathers were up to no good. And so, you know, I want to just acknowledge that for some of us, it's hard to think about God is our father. Maybe we didn't have a father. Or like I said, maybe he was a problem child. So try to imagine maybe a good father. Maybe you had a friend that had a great father or you had some perfect thing of what a father would be like. So try and think about that father maybe if you fall into that category.

And also some languages have ways for us to formally and informally address each other. English has this a little bit, but Spanish has it a little bit better, I think. Right? If you have some small children that you have a relationship with, maybe they're your kids or they're the neighbor's kids that are over all the time, what might you call them? Miha, miho maybe, right? You have some kind of relationship with them. But if you're driving down the street and you see a bunch of kids out in the field flying kites that you don't know, you don't use that term, right? Because you're not, there's no relationship there. You're not familiar with them. You might use Nina or Nino, right? You know. English, we do this a little bit, right? If we want to show respect to somebody, we might use the term sir or ma'am, mister, right?

We're not, hey buddy, right? When you're trying to show respect. So there's some of this going on. So. We have to talk about that too, because this term has this, ABBA has this feeling of this familiarity, this relationship.

And I was always told that ABBA meant daddy, right? By the way, ABBA is a Swedish music group that wrote some really cool music, by the way. If you're young and you don't know who ABBA is, Go look them up on YouTube, some really cool harmonies and great stuff. But Abba is the way it would be said in the Bible. That means father, and it's a way a child would address their father. Okay, so it's got this kind of child-parent relationship. It turns out it also is the way an adult child would address their father. And in that situation, it means something a little bit different. Right? When a small child says, daddy, that has a different connotation to us than when an adult child says, that's my dad. Right? It's different. Kind of hard to explain, but we understand that. We know that. And so that's kind of the difference here. Abba is this term that small children can use. And it's also a term that an adult child can use, but it's a little bit different.

However, even that's not quite right. Because we've got this whole history of the Old Testament, thousands of years, and God's name is so holy, we won't even say it or write it down. and then all of the sudden we call him daddy. That's kinda... not very... it doesn't flow, it doesn't work right, right? I think God is more than daddy, right? There's more to it than that. And so that's what we need to talk about today.

And so, but before we do that, I think before we can talk about what Abba means, we need to talk about what father means. Open your Bibles with me. Matthew 6, 9 through 13. This is a phrase or a chapter or part of a Bible that we probably all have memorized. And when you get there, you're gonna see it and go, oh yeah, I know this. What passage is this? What do we refer to this as? The Lord's Prayer. I kinda wish we called it the Our Father Prayer instead of the Lord's Prayer because this is the prayer that wasn't for the Lord. This is the prayer that the Lord used to teach us how to pray, it's our prayer. It's not the Lord's Prayer, it's our prayer. So let's either read it or say it aloud if you know it. Now some of us, if you're old like me, Pastor Today was talking about being old. Ha ha. He's not old yet. If you're old like me, you learned this in the King James Version, okay? That's okay, you wanna say it in the King James Version, that's all right, that's how I'm gonna say it. That's

the way I know it. But if you're reading along in your Bible, read whatever version you've got. How does this start? It says, "our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever." Five verses, five verses, and fully half of them, two and a half of those verses, have nothing to do with (anything) except God's holiness. The first two verses are, our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Well, I haven't even talked about anything I want yet. Right? And then the last half of the last verse, for thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. In the model prayer that Jesus gave us, he spends half the time. talking about God and who he is, our Father. We have to understand this, right? Because a lot of times when we start a prayer, if we need something, we'll come in and we're like, what? Hey God, I'm in a pickle. I need you to do something, right? I need you to fix this. I need you to give me this. I need you to do that. And maybe the prayer is holy and pure, right? We're praying for somebody to get better from some horrible disease, right? It's a good prayer. But we still, hey God, can you heal so-and-so? And we just completely skip addressing who God is. We come off a little bit like a spoiled child. They just comes bebopping into God's presence and says, hey, stop the whole universe, I have a request. Right? We have to recognize who God is. Right? What does he mean?

See, if we don't learn to say Father, then we don't know his authority. And if we don't know his authority, then I'm the ultimate authority. And if I'm the ultimate authority, then I don't need to pray to God. We get too familiar with God. And if we don't learn to say our Father and what it really means, we're always going to struggle with our prayers. I think sometimes here in Western Christianity, we've made God sometimes a little too familiar. God does want to be your friend. God does want to be involved in your life, but he's still God. He's still God. We have to learn that.

There was an article by Chad Harrington, Christian writer. And he flew over to Israel, and he lands in Tel Aviv, gets grilled by security for a couple hours, trying to get through security in Israel. I mean, Israel's got some pretty tight security. Finally gets through, heads to the restroom, right? And in the restroom, he sees this

Jewish father giving his very, very young son a life lesson. It's a very good life lesson. It's the lesson that you should wash your hands after you use the restroom. Hopefully we've all learned that lesson. If you don't, talk to one of us, we'll instruct you in this lesson. Okay, so he's teaching his very young son the importance of doing this. And the father says to the boy, he says, when I give you a command to do something, I want you to call me Abba. And the little boy, very young, sharp as a tack, said, "yes, Abba." Because Dad just gave him a command. Right? He didn't say, "yes, Daddy, I'll call you Abba." Yes, Abba. And Chad said at that moment, I realized that the word Abba didn't mean what I thought it meant all these years.

See, Daddy's not quite enough. There's more to it than Daddy. See? It doesn't have the, daddy doesn't have the bite that Abba does. It's personal. It does indicate a relationship, but that's not the whole story. Abba doesn't mean daddy. It doesn't mean dad. **It means father, I will obey you.** Now, we don't have a word like this in English, at least not that I know of. And so we have trouble translating it, because it's that, Abba really translates into that phrase, Father, I will obey you. It's almost like it's some kind of cross between Father and Sir, right? Anybody ever been in the military? Any military vets here? No, none? Whew, we gotta change that. Going to the military's good for ya, didn't you know that? Right, but we know in the military, right, when your commander gives you a command, tells you to do something, what do you say? Yes sir. Sir, yes sir. I want you to jump, how high sir, right? And so Abba kind of combines this father, I've got a relationship with you, but sir, I respect you and I will obey you. Even when it's hard, even when it's difficult, even when I don't understand. Right?

See, **there's two elements to this word Abba. The one is the intimacy**, the father, the daddy. We get that part, but there's also **the obedience**. The obedience that goes with that. How happy would your father had been when you were a child if he had asked you to do something around the house, some chore, mow the lawn, clean up, whatever it was, and you said yes, daddy, and didn't do it. Right? Would that have worked out well for you? No, it wouldn't have been my house either. Right? Thing was, Dad knew where I lived and he would come find me. Right? So, you know, just having a relationship is not enough. It's not enough.

It's like, have you ever been out and about? Maybe you get a little bit lost. You stop and ask somebody for directions. Excuse me, sir, can you tell me how to get to....., and then they give you instructions. Afterwards, what do you do? You follow the instructions. You obey, right? Wouldn't it be kind of silly to get instructions from somebody and go, that guy's a loser, I ain't gonna do that. No, we follow the instructions, we obey, right? And that's what daddy's telling us. And so this Abba word has both meanings in it, okay?

A small child can use this word, an adult child can use this word, but most importantly, it's an obedient child that uses this word. Now, this word is only used three times in the Bible. Once by Jesus, twice by Paul. And I'm not gonna talk about the ones by Paul. We're gonna leave those for the small groups to discuss and deal with. But we're gonna talk about the one that Jesus uses. And it comes to us in his prayer. Let's turn to. Don't have that on there? Let's turn to Mark 14. Mark chapter 14. And Jesus uses this as he's in the prayer of Gethsemane, in the garden of Gethsemane, getting ready to pray right before the crucifixion. And he goes off by himself to talk to God, right? Because **Abba is heart language**. Right, it's intimate language. This is heart language. You ever loved somebody so much, you almost didn't know how to express it? Like, I love you doesn't seem to be enough. If you've ever been a parent, hopefully you feel that way about your children. If you've ever been married, I hope you feel that way about your spouse. I hope you feel that way about your parents or your grandparents. I love these people so much I don't know how to express it. And so the term that's used, all three times it's used, in the Bible it says Abba Father. It uses both terms, Abba Father. Why? Because Father's not quite enough to denote. what Abba, Father, means. Because Abba is heart language. And if they had meant a child calling their daddy, they would have used the term papa, which was a Greek term that they still use for their father. They don't mean daddy. It means Abba father.

So let's look at this story in Mark 14, 35 to 36. It says, going a little farther, he, Jesus, fell on the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him. Abba, Father, he said, everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me, yet not what I will, but what? But what you will. See, the obedient child? He's looking at a death where he gets tortured to death on a cross. I'm sure that looks like a whole bunch of no fun, right? I mean, that's what death on the cross was meant to be. And he's saying, you know, when I was in heaven, I knew this was

gonna be hard, but now I'm here on earth and I'm human. Wow. This is going to be hard. And so, like, is there any other way we can do this? Just any other way. But if there isn't, I'll do it. The obedient child calls his dad father, Abba father. See, when Jesus is talking to God, God is not Jesus' daddy, right? God is not Jesus' daddy, the way we think of daddy. God is the Father, the Holy One, the beginning, the end, the I Am. Right? He says, Abba Father. And the word Father is not enough to denote what it is. If Abba just meant Daddy, why would you say Daddy Father? That's a weird thing to say, right? I don't think any of us ever called our dad, daddy father. Right? But when you say Abba father, you're saying the one who I obey, my father. The one. Right? Now that term makes sense. And we see that in Paul's usage too. But like I said, we're gonna leave that for the small groups.

And real quick, I wanna talk about one other person that doesn't use the term Abba because it doesn't exist yet when he was alive, but he invokes the same meaning, and that's Isaac. Way back in Genesis 22, if you want to turn there, you remember the story that Abraham has been waiting for a child, because God says, you're gonna be the father of a great nation. He didn't have any kids. And Abraham is just like, man, God, what gives? Finally, he's 100 years old when he has his kid. I can't imagine. I barely kept up with my kids when I was like 30. How would you keep up with a kid when you're 100? Some years later when Isaac is a teenager, maybe even as old as 20 years old, somewhere in there, God comes to Abraham and says, "I want you to sacrifice your son Isaac." Abraham is known as an obeyer. He's obedient, right? Remember God told him to move, he moved. Abraham has been obedient his whole life. And so when God says, I want you to sacrifice your son, he says, okay. So they go to Mount Moriah three days away. And finally Abraham says, you know, to his servants, you stay here, me and the boy are gonna go up on the mountain. Now I don't know what they talked about during a three-day journey. But Isaac is a bright young boy, I assume. And he's gotta be wondering, where's the sacrifice? Cause we got wood, we got a flint to start a fire, we got a knife, but there ain't no lamb. So finally when he and dad are alone and they're hiking up Mount Moriah, he says in verse seven, "Father, the wood and the fire are here. but where's the lamb for the burnt offering?" And Abraham says, God will provide. And Isaac got to be going, "ummm, okay." But they go on up, they get the altar ready, they get the wood on it. And then Abraham ties up Isaac and puts him as the sacrifice on the fire, on the altar.

Now, how easy would it be for a teenager to get away from a 120-year-old man? Right? You just play keep away, because you're faster than he is, and he's just never gonna catch you. But Isaac is an obeyer because Abraham is an obeyer and he taught his son to obey. And Isaac uses this term, father. And he didn't use the term Abba father, it didn't exist yet, because Isaac is a Hebrew before there are Hebrews. He's Jewish before there are Jews. And nobody's come up with the term, the Aramaic term, Abba yet. But he uses this in the same way.

By the way, did you know, this is for trivia night at some point in the future, because I'm sure it'll show up on one of those trivia cards. Mount Moriah, where they do this, they try to offer Isaac as God instructed. God stopped them. By the way, if you don't know the story, God stopped them. That's the same place where Solomon builds the temple years later. Years later. And the Garden of Gethsemane is only a short distance from there, of where Jesus cries out and says, Abba, Father. Those two locations are just very, very close to each other. They were both questioning what was going to happen, but they were both obedient to their father, even though it was hard, even though it was difficult.

And now you know why. Abba doesn't mean daddy. It's not enough. It means more than that. See, because our **father wants more than our affections, he wants more than just daddy, he wants our obedience too**, right? He wants our affections and our obedience. And daddy is fun. If you've ever been a parent, being daddy or mommy is fun. We like it when our kids call us daddy and mommy. But Abba's better. Abba's better.

A reflection today, are you showing the name of God the respect it deserves? Are you giving God the respect that he deserves? That he is someone who you love, that you would gladly obey? In your prayers, do you take time to recognize who God is? our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

The challenge this week is to make sure you begin your prayers with Father or Abba and make sure you mean the Father who I love and obey.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for these writings that you've left us where we learned so much about your character and your heart and how much you love us, Lord. And Lord, help us to reflect that love to you. Help us to be the kind of people that are just reflecting your love to everyone so that when people see us, they don't see us, they see you. The God who loves us and the God that

we want to love and follow and obey, even when we don't understand. Lord,
thank you for all that you do for us. We love you so much. In Jesus' name, amen.