



Prescriptions for the Heart

Hope for the Christian Bidding a Parent Farewell

"Was I a sufficient son or daughter?"

"I hope I made my parent proud."

"How could I ever repay my mother or father for the sacrifices he or she made...for *me*? Now that he or she is gone, I will never fully be able to express my gratitude."

"I wish I would have spent more time with my mom or dad."

The list could go on and on. Similar thoughts and questions may swarm through your mind after a parent has passed and, oftentimes, linger even after accepting he or she is gone. Most people do not like goodbyes, especially when they consist of bidding a loved one farewell. While losing a cherished relative or friend is never easy, when it is the person who gave you life, raised and nurtured you, provided for your needs and shaped your character, it almost brings a sense of guilt along with your grief: Did I do "enough" for someone who selflessly did so much for me?

As they are naturally older than their children, and in some instances, much older, losing a parent is probable in one's lifetime. But even though it is expected and quite common, it does not lessen or alleviate the shock, anger and denial people frequently endure when they hear a parent has passed or know it is likely to happen in the very near future. However, God's Word makes the realization everyone has an appointment with death very clear (Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:22), and nobody is immune from it, including our treasured parents. Whether it be an adored parent, grandparent, child, dear friend, pet or other relative, we will all face the bitter sting of death at some point in our lifetimes. Acceptance of death is no doubt difficult, but in the case of losing a parent, you know he or she would not want you to live in depression, detachment or resentment and neither would the Lord (Philippians 4:4, 11; 1 Thessalonians 5:18).

While our earthly parents patiently care for us when we are sick, tenderly console us when we are hurting and eagerly celebrate with us when we are on the mountaintops of our lives, think of how much more (Matthew 7:11) our Heavenly Father can be charged with the same attributes, only intensified. He indeed does not merely tend to us when we are sick—He is our Healer (Jeremiah 17:14). He alone is capable of fully comforting us during times of sorrow (Psalm 34:18; John 14:26; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4), particularly after losing a parent. He undeniably exults over us (Zephaniah 3:17) and deserves the credit

for any and all of life's victories. You see, God is a Parent unlike any other, the ultimate Father Who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

In Christ, there is hope beyond the bereavement and joy past the pain. The Bible assures us, "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope," (1 Thessalonians 4:13, NASB). Find encouragement in the later portion of the same chapter. If your beloved father or mother has gone on to be with the Lord, rejoice in the promise you will be reunited if you, too, have accepted Christ as your Savior. It is perfectly normal to miss a parent who has passed and wish you could have just one more conversation with him or her, but remember, you do not have to grieve hopelessly or helplessly. During those times of anguish, lean on the One who has experienced grief more notably than any other individual (Isaiah 53:3).

One of the most beautiful aspects of being a child of God is the awareness you have a constant Father indescribably watching over you and unconditionally loving you. Romans 8:14-18 says, "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us," (ESV).

What an astonishing truth! Even if we have lost both of our parents, we are not orphans. There are few things sweeter on earth than a loving family adopting a needy orphan in search of a home and admiration, and God's Word is very straightforward in describing such a delicate topic. Though we are shamefully unworthy and deserve no reception whatsoever, God considers us His sons or daughters and mercifully adopts us into His royal family. But the overwhelming blessings do not end there; besides adopting us and calling us by name, He deems us joint-heirs with Christ where we are guaranteed an inheritance which will never perish, spoil, or fade (1 Peter 1:4). Above all, as those of us grieve the loss of a mother or father, we still have an intimate relationship with the Lord Himself. The word "Abba" used in Romans translates to "daddy" or "papa," suggesting our connection with Him couldn't become any closer (Theology of Work).

Our "Abba" is mighty enough to be our Savior yet humble enough to be our Father. What an amazing reality to continuously ponder as we cope the loss of a parent.

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Theology of Work. <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/calling-god-abba-father-1>

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