

LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations

---

2009

## Special Intimacy Prayer

David B. Earley

*Liberty University*, [dbearley@liberty.edu](mailto:dbearley@liberty.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs)

---

### Recommended Citation

Earley, David B., "Special Intimacy Prayer" (2009). *LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations*. 141.  
[https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts\\_fac\\_pubs/141](https://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/141)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Crossing. It has been accepted for inclusion in LBTS Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of Scholars Crossing. For more information, please contact [scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu](mailto:scholarlycommunications@liberty.edu).

## Special Intimacy Prayer

Imagine the thoughts that went through his mind that day. He was exhausted and hungry, and he smelled like a pig. He had been away from home so long...too long. Sure, he missed the warm meals and having his own bed, and the steady work and resulting allowance were definitely nothing to scoff at. But there was one thing he missed much more than all of that. He missed Father.

Over and over he had heard Father's voice in his head. It was deep, but warm. Many times that voice had a laugh in it, but was never frivolous. It spoke words of unerring wisdom. But best of all, Father's voice was always full of love, even on the day he left.

Why did he have to say what he had said that day? "Give me my share." He could tell his arrogant departure speech had hurt Father deeply. How he would love to take back every stupid word. But it was too late for that. He had made a fool of himself, had wasted his inheritance, and worst of all he had hurt Father.

The best he could do now was to go back and say, "I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men."

So he went back to his father's house and the most amazing thing happened:

*But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him (Luke 15:20).*

Jesus told us this story to show us the Father heart of God. It teaches us one of my favorite types of prayer. I call it special intimacy or *Abba* prayer.

The word *Abba* is an Aramaic term used in the Bible to describe the unique relationship granted to believers under the new covenant. It is the most intimate term available to express a child's tender relationship with his or her father, and as such was used only by children. It is translated as "Father" or "Daddy." It is a personal word that moves prayer into the realm of deep intimacy as shown by Jesus when, in deep agony at the Garden of Gethsemane, He unburdened His soul to His Father in heaven (see Mark 14:36).<sup>1</sup>

*Abba* prayer is the special privilege of the New Testament saint (see Rom. 8:15-16; Gal. 4:5-6). In the Old Testament believers were not allowed such personal access to God. They certainly were not encouraged to call Him "Father," let alone "Daddy." According to Professor Joachim Jeremias, "There is not a single example of the use *abba* in the whole of Jewish literature."<sup>2</sup>

Special intimacy prayer is the way a child of God approaches our Heavenly Father. It is crawling into the Father's lap to receive His love, comfort, healing, and strength. It is taking our Heavenly Daddy's hand and walking a while. Special intimacy prayer is more than prayer of the lips or of the mind. It is the deep prayer of the heart. It is crying out to the Father to be *your* Father and to "father" you through a difficult season of life. It is bringing your prodigal soul home to God and experiencing the Father running to you, throwing His arms around you, and giving you a hug and a kiss. It is enjoying the same privilege of intimacy with the Father that Jesus the Son experienced in the flesh.<sup>3</sup>

\* \* \*

"Father, please 'father' me. I feel like a lost little boy. The world is more than I can handle. I am supposed to be the one with the answers and I don't have a clue. Everyone needs me to be the parent right now, but I need permission to be your little boy for just a few minutes. Daddy, father me."

This was my prayer. I was buried under the stress of being the pastor of a large church. My three teenage sons were at the natural stage of life where they were pulling away from their mother and especially needed me to father them through adolescence. I felt the terrible tug of having to parent both my children and aged parents. My mom had just passed away. My dad needed me. My wife's father was dying. I was overwhelmed with feeling like I had to be everyone's "parent."

So I practiced the joy of special intimacy prayer...and a wonderful thing happened. I felt the reassuring hug of God around my weary soul. I sensed Him saying, "You'll do fine. I am with you all the way."

\* \* \*

One Sunday I was speaking on the prodigal son and special intimacy prayer in my church. As I spoke, I found myself nearly overwhelmed with a passion that everyone would experience what I had known in special intimacy prayer. My voice quaked as I spoke of the Father running up to us, putting His arms around us, and kissing our cheeks. I was startled by the boldness in which I asked the audience if they had ever known the hug and kiss of God. One of our members sat on the fourth row with a deep frown etched on her face.

Afterward this wonderful, mature believer came to me with her complaint. "I have never had such an intimate experience with God. It makes me uncomfortable when you talk about being hugged and kissed by God."

I waited for a rebuke. But she surprised me when she dropped her head and asked, "Will you pray for me?"

I put my arm on her shoulder and prayed, "Father, this is Your daughter. She has served You so faithfully and diligently for many years. You love her more than she can possibly imagine. I ask that in Your way and in Your time that You would reveal Your fatherly love for her on a deeper level than she has ever known. Let her experience Your hug."

Wiping tears off her cheeks she walked away.

The next Sunday I saw her approaching. The moment I saw her I knew.

"Pastor Dave," she said through dancing eyes. "Now I know what you mean when you talk about being hugged by the Father. This week I got my hug. The rest is more than words can express."

\* \* \*

I wonder. Have you ever gotten a hug from God? Do you know what it means to feel the Father's loving arms around you? Have you ever sensed His tender kiss on your cheek?

Have you truly experienced the Father love of God? Have you ever felt the freedom to call God, "Daddy"? Do you know what it is like to lose your little hand in His great big hand? Have you heard His warm voice saying, "There, there My child. It will be all right. Father is here. Let Daddy take care of it."

When was the last time you snuggled up in the Father's lap?

At times, prayer is simply crawling into Daddy's lap. He has a big lap and plenty of room and love for you there.

Quietly, picture yourself crawling up in the lap of your Heavenly Father. Feel His strong arms around you. Know that you are in the place where you are loved completely.

Let the troubles of the day disappear in the power of His presence. Tell Him all about everything that happened to you today.

Feel free to sigh, smile, cry, or just listen to the thump of His heart beating with yours.

Thank Him for loving you enough to be your Heavenly Daddy. Slowly allow yourself to be drawn into deeper prayer, worship, rest, and love.

**NOTES:**

1. William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1980), p. 259.
2. Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayers of Jesus* (Philadelphia: SCM, 1967), p. 11.
3. Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), p. 135.

---

Dr. Dave Earley is an experienced pastor, small group leader, church planter and coach. He serves as the Director of the Liberty Center for Church Planting at Liberty University. He is also Chairman of the Department of Pastoral Leadership and Church Planting for Liberty Theological Seminary. He has authored eleven books on subjects such as small groups, leadership, prayer, and the Christian life. [www.daveearley.com](http://www.daveearley.com) This article is an excerpt from his book *A Prayer Odyssey*