

### Everlasting Father'

William Franklin writes: *If he's wealthy and prominent, and you stand in awe of him, call him "Father." If he sits in shirt sleeves and suspenders at a ballgame and picnic, call him "Pop." If he wheels the baby carriage and carries bundles meekly, call him "Papa" (with the accent on the first syllable). If he belongs to a literary circle and writes cultured papers, call him "Papa" (with the accent on the last syllable). If, however, he makes a pal of you when you're good, and is too wise to let you pull the wool over his loving eyes when you're not; if moreover, you're quite sure no other fellow you know has quite so fine a father, you may call him "Dad."*

<Peter S. Seymour, "A Father's Love," Hallmark card>

### READ: Isa 9:1-7 (NLT)

On the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent, Pastor John looked at the term – Wonderful Counselor.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent, Pastor Jerry explained that Jesus is the Mighty God.

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent, and I want to look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> term - **Everlasting Father**.

Isaiah was a prophet in Jerusalem, in the Southern Kingdom of Judah, until about 700 BC.

His ministry spanned the reigns of 4 kings. He records his vision of the ultimate King and Kingdom, when he says in **Is. 6:1** - ***"In the year King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple"*** (NLT) He had a vision of the Holy God – The **Everlasting Father** – Who commissioned him to be His spokesman to a disobedient people – Israel.

Back in Genesis, God had promised Abraham that he would be the Father of many nations, that he would receive Land, and he and his offspring would enjoy the presence of God Almighty as long as they remained faithful. Now the Lord is sending Isaiah to speak words of judgment upon these people of God who were no longer faithful to Him. They were about to lose their land to the Assyrians, and God's presence was not with them to bring them victory as before. However, there was a hope for the future. Isaiah brings words of both judgment and hope. God's Kingdom will continue, and in the future, He will be the King, just as He was in the beginning and wanted to be for them all along.

### **Dark Times for Israel – READ: Is. 8:19-22**

In the Ancient Near East it was a known thing to refer to the King as Father as a token of respect. Even the priests and prophets were called father by some. As with most OT prophecy, Isaiah is speaking words to the people of his day that they could understand and relate to. At the same time, because they were words of prophecy, anointed by the Holy Spirit, they also would mean something special to the people of later times as well. We read the words of prophecy in the OT with enthusiasm because they seem to clearly speak to us about Jesus and God's love for all people. We too have hope of something better yet to come. The Ancient Near East kings would take on several names during their reign. The king was installed with his given name, but as his reputation and conquests grew, so names would be added to his reign. He could be known by up to five acquired names beyond his given name. Many times these were statements about the king and not just single names. For example – King Niqmepa of Egypt had these titles: Lord of Justice, Master of the Royal House, King Who Protects, and King Who Builds. How about this king's name: Tiglath-Pileser III – AKA – "Gates of Justice Which Give the Correct Judgment for the Ruler of the Four Quarters, Which Offer the Yield of the Mountains and the Seas, Which Admit the Produce of Mankind Before the King Their Master."

Ancient Hebrew writing only shows the main words or names, and the smaller connecting words are left out, since they are understood. The text in Isaiah that we are using for this season speaks of a child who was to be born and who has royal qualities – a future king – an influential king. We read of the titles given to this king prophetically, before he is born, before he is installed as king. These terms are not just names, but they are statements about this king and his reign. The Wonderful Counselor IS the Mighty God, and the Everlasting Father IS the Prince of Peace. Let’s look a little closer at the term or title – Everlasting Father.

### **First let’s look at the word Everlasting or Eternal:**

Eternal refers to something or someone that is not limited by time. “The eternal has no beginning and no end but stands outside of and beyond time.” (Encyclopedia of Bible Words, Zondervan, Inc.). The Eternal Kingdom is a reality that we cannot see at this time, but it exists none-the-less. It takes real faith to trust in what we cannot see now. The people in Isaiah’s day had to believe in the hope of the coming Kingdom while it was so far out of sight. We too, *must walk by faith and not by sight* as we trust in the God and King of the Kingdom still to come. Jesus taught us to pray, “Father, Your Kingdom come.” Because He is eternal, He knows the beginning from the end and the things that we can not see from the visible. *He is the same yesterday, today and forever.* “Thus we walk as eternal citizens of an eternal kingdom. We accept by faith an eternal life, won in an eternal redemption.” God is eternal, and He is Everlasting since He is from the beginning to the end of all that is.

### **Now the term Father:**

When my sons were young, they had T-shirts and posters that had various dinosaur characters on them all ending with “Saurus.” Corinne even created a T-shirt for our Cub Scout Pack called Cub-Scout-A-Saur with a dinosaur drawn on it wearing a Cub Scout hat and neckerchief. It had a contrived definition that looked like a dictionary quote. I found the original Dad-A-Saurus T-Shirt definition, which I wore proudly.

However, I made my own definition up based on many years of parental experience ...

**Dad-a-Saurus:** **1:** a big fluffy creature who loves children **2:** protector; guardian **3:** one who takes the offspring to the park, zoo, camping, ball games, and other fun events **4:** the one to call upon when in trouble **5:** the one who you can tell anything to **6:** care-giver; provider **7:** the one to snuggle up with for warmth and love.

I am proud and elated to say that my boys still come to me anytime they need help, be it emotional, physical, or spiritual. I couldn’t ask for a better legacy. I love every moment we spend together.

How is the term “Father” used in the bible when referring to God?

The key word for “father” is “ab” in Hebrew and is found some 1191 times in the OT plus the 9 occurrences of the Aramaic term “Abba.” There are many listings of genealogies that use this term in the OT as well as many compound names, such as Ab-raham (father of many). There are only a few times in the OT when God is referred to as Father. When this occurs, it is referring to God as the Father of the nation of Israel (the people He called to Himself – to be His own – adopted, so to speak). The term is never really used at the individual level. Even in our text, it is more used as “the father of eternity” or founder of the ages.

## **Provision and Discipline:**

In O.T. times, the father figure was dominant. It was a patriarchal society. The father was to be respected by the children and others in the household. He was responsible for the well-being of the family unit and for carrying out discipline. God, the Everlasting Father, provides for and disciplines His family unit.

In Genesis, the book of beginnings, God provided for Adam and Eve in the Garden with fruit and vegetables to eat. In the wilderness God provided for the Israelites with quail and manna to eat. This Everlasting Father promises to provide for all who trust in Him. Paul tells the Philippians, ***“And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.”*** (Phil 4:19 – NLT).

It is recorded in the O.T. that God disciplines as a father does. Deut 8:5 – ***“So you should realize that just as a parent disciplines a child, the LORD your God disciplines you to help you.”*** NLT

The same idea remains in the N.T. - Heb 12:5-6 – ***And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, “My child, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.”*** NLT Quoting: Prov. 3:11-12.

I grew up in a disciplinarian environment; I may still have the scars to prove it. ☺

## **Prime Responsibility:**

The primary responsibility for the father in O.T. times was to bring up the children in the ways of the Lord their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel. This meant to demonstrate a holy life to the next generation – a life pleasing to God. He was also required to teach the Word of God to the children constantly. This is the great command to the people of Israel, the charge that they would recite every morning and evening – the Shema –

Deut 6:4-9 - ***“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again. Tie them to your hands as a reminder, and wear them on your forehead. 9 Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”*** NLT

The father was to teach these things to his children. The command remains in place in our N.T. day and age. We hear the charge given to these parents who come to dedicate their child to Lord. Paul records in his letter to the Ephesians –

Eph 6:4 – ***“And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.”*** NLT

Fathers were and are to be the teachers of the faith to the children. Children are commanded to honor father and mother. Fathers can instruct the children, but the children will make their own choices. So with God, the Everlasting Father, He desires all to have a personal relationship with Him, but people can choose to reject the invitation. Fathers are responsible to communicate a living faith in God to their children. We need wisdom to accomplish this.

## **God is our Everlasting Father:**

The O.T. records that God desired to be father to the people he called to be His – Israel. He called the people of Israel into being to make a nation of people who belong to Him and are faithful. Their very identity as a people was wrapped up in being established as God’s people – Holy to the Lord. God fulfilled fatherly responsibilities to Israel. Deut 1:31 – **“And you saw how the LORD your God cared for you again and again here in the wilderness, just as a father cares for his child.”** NLT We saw earlier how God provided for and disciplined his people.

In Psalm 103, David says, **“The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him.”** NLT

The family relationship is used in Scripture to show God’s motives for his actions toward humanity, especially toward Israel. God has acted as a Father – the Everlasting Father.

To us, as New Testament people, the word “Father” is “especially precious to believers, who realize that they have an intimate family relationship with God, who has revealed Himself as our Father.” There is a shift in the N.T. toward an individual relationship with God as Father from the corporate concept of the O.T. The transcendent God of the O.T. came to earth in the person of Jesus. In a humble birth story God became one of us for a while. The distant God of our fathers was suddenly shown in a new light. During Jesus’ ministry on earth, He referred to God as Father numerous times. In fact the N.T. uses the term Father about 250 times to refer to God. All of the fatherly responsibilities of God now are promised to all who are His children. Jesus tells us as recorded in John’s Gospel, – **“For people can’t come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me...”** NLT God is still the Everlasting Father – still drawing people into a relationship with Him. Now He does so through Jesus Christ. John 14:6 – **Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”** NLT

*A father is a creature that is forced to endure childbirth without an anesthetic. A father growls when he feels good and laughs when scared half to death. A father never feels worthy of the worship in a child’s eyes. He’s never quite the hero his daughter thinks; never quite the man his son believes him to be, and this worries him – sometimes. So he works too hard to try to smooth the rough places in the road for those of his own who will follow him. A father gets very angry when the school grades aren’t as good as he thinks they should be. So he scolds his son - though he knows it’s the teacher’s fault. A father gives his daughter away to another man who is not nearly good enough – so he can have grandchildren who are smarter than anybody’s. A father makes bets with insurance companies about who will live the longest. One day, he loses – and the bet is paid off to those he leaves behind. <Paul Harvey, quoted in Lloyd Cory, Quote Unquote>*

Jesus referred to God as His Father, making Himself equal with God. Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus. The royal child was born who would bring peace with God. He is the Prince of Peace. In John’s Gospel, Jesus said, **“The Father and I are one.”** And **“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”** So we see the words of Isaiah again come to life with excitement. The royal titles or statements given to this child before his birth makes sense. **These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.** The Hebrew statements about this King tell us, **The Wonderful Counselor is the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father is the Prince of Peace** - - and his name is Jesus. His titles were given to Him by God through the prophet and are far superior to any earthly king’s titles given to them by men or themselves touting their conquests.

The Everlasting Father can be your Father. John 1:12 – **“But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.”** NLT

His desire is to be in relationship with you just as you as parents desire to be in relationship with your children, or as you children desire to be in a good relationship with your father. This Christmas, won’t you search your heart and make Jesus your Savior so you can be adopted by God and He can be your Everlasting Father.