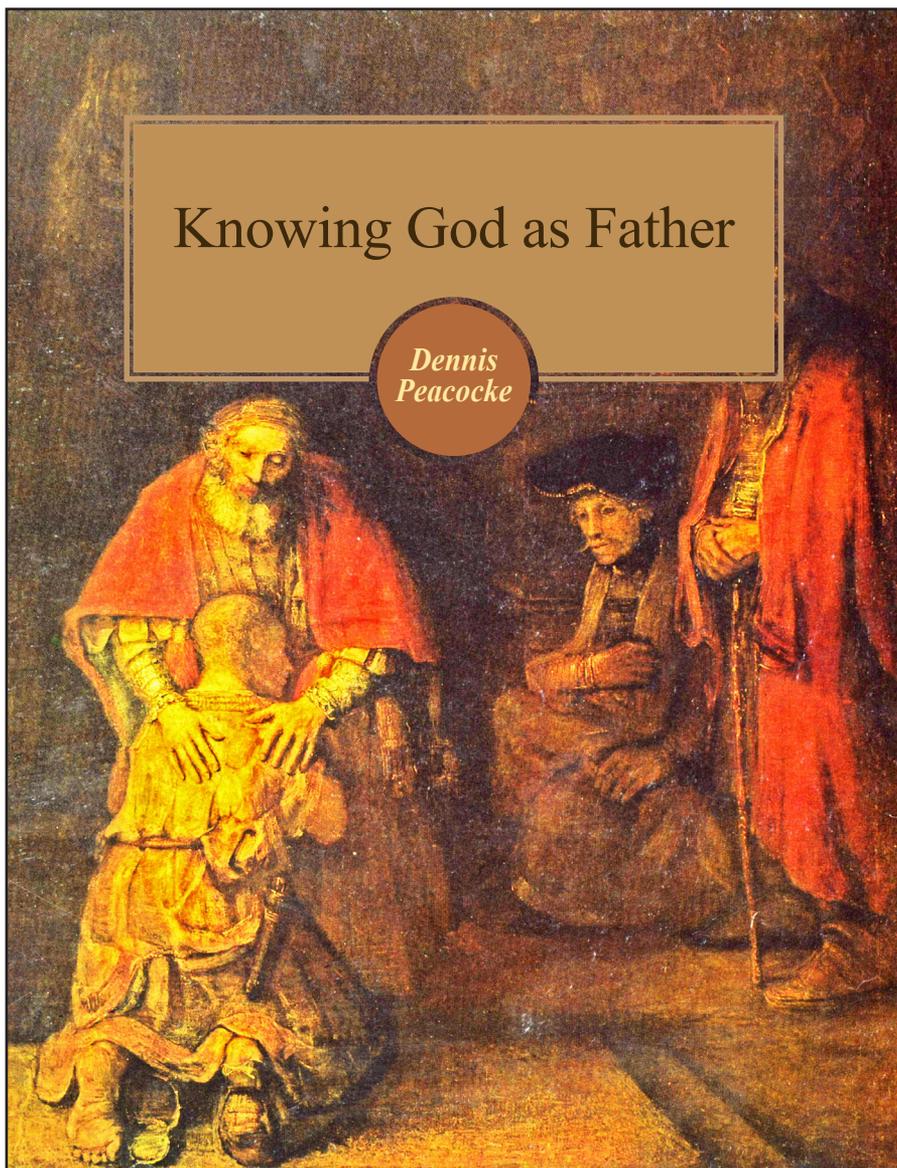


# Knowing God as Father

*Dennis  
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## **GoStrategic** (Formerly Strategic Christian Services)

Founded in 1979 by Dennis Peacocke who serves as President, GoStrategic is a prophetic ministry committed to training and equipping leaders of every cultural sphere in discipling nations and transforming the world. GoStrategic operates internationally, educating Christians through our Business Leadership School and Strategic Life Training correspondence schools, events, educational products, networking, and consulting services. Our ministry headquarters are based in Santa Rosa, California, with affiliates and schools in Mexico, Central and South America, Europe, Asia, and New Zealand.

GoStrategic equips believers to be leaders in the communities where they live, work, and serve. We specialize in bridging the gap between spiritual truth and the practical implementation of those truths in confronting real-world problems. With over three decades of experience educating, modeling, and connecting like-minded individuals, we have seen first-hand the fruit of Christians applying Biblical principles to the most complex challenges. It is our sincere hope that the services we provide result in thousands of communities transformed as believers step in to rebuild, repair, and restore our world. To learn more, please visit our website: [\*\*www.gostrategic.org\*\*](http://www.gostrategic.org)

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A former business owner, Dennis Peacocke is the founder and president of GoStrategic, a Christian leadership organization dedicated to demonstrating the relevance of Christianity to every area of contemporary life. He has authored four books: *On the Destiny of Nations*, *Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men*, *Doing Business God's Way*, and *The Emperor Has No Clothes*, as well as recorded numerous audio and video presentations.

Dennis and his wife Jan reside in Santa Rosa, California. They have three adult children and twelve grandchildren.



# Knowing God as Father

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## **Purposes of the Series:**

- To begin to understand more clearly the mystery of our God in three Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- To begin to more clearly identify Christ's mission to lead us to God the Father as the Supreme point of life, authority, and the center of Christ's own life.
- To discover how to relate to our Father more fully and please Him more as His sons and daughters.

## **Teaching One:**

### **Fellowshipping with the Father, Son & Holy Spirit**

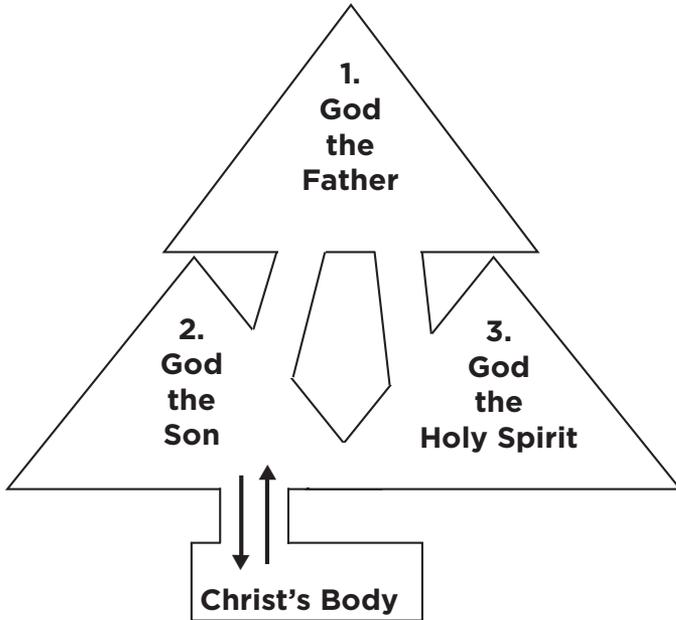
#### **I. God is one Being who dwells within three distinct personalities.**

A. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, theologically speaking, is a subject of immense debate, study, and mystery.

1. The word "Trinity" never appears in Scripture, but God as Father, Son, and Spirit appears a number of times in the Old Testament.
2. The early Church Fathers dealt with many heresies, debates, and councils regarding the doctrine of the "Three-in-One God," culminating in the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. If you are interested in the debates, an excellent source of study is *The Creeds of Christendom* by Philip Schaff.
3. With the exceptions of the Jehovah's Witnesses and some "Jesus Only" Pentecostal groups, all historic church denominations stand squarely behind the Church Councils' doctrines (Apostle's Creed, etc.) regarding the Trinity.

B. How can one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) dwell in three different persons?

**Diagram One:  
One Way of Looking at the Mystery  
of the Trinity**



**ISSUES:**

- One essence and character
- Three distinct personalities
- Three distinct but interrelated functions

**TEXTS:**

- John 17:11, 21, 22, 23 (Unity)
- I Corinthians 15:22-28 (Father's headship)
- Ephesians 1:17-23 (Church's service to Father to fill "all in all")

**II. The Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) form “Father God’s Community” and as such is the community, relationship, and Kingdom into which His children are born and matured.**

A. As Jesus pointed out in His prayer in John 17, redeemed man has been called to participate in the Godhead’s life and purposes.

1. Christ has through the Holy Spirit birthed us into God’s Kingdom family (John 3:3; Colossians 1:12-13).

2. “In Christ” we have access to all Christ’s family heritage (Romans 8:17).

B. The Godhead’s relationship within Itself is the “lived-out” model or pattern for us to study and follow in these revealed areas:

1. Fatherhood — Sonship
2. Spiritual authority — discipleship
3. Pastoral care — priestly service
4. Sending — receiving
5. Fellowship through co-laboring
6. Division of labor — spheres of authority
7. Direct rule — rule through another (Psalm 110)

## Teaching Two:

### Knowing Our Heavenly Father's Love as the Source of All Life (Part I)

**I. Christ's mission on earth was primarily to lead Father's elected sons and daughters back to Father as the source of all life, authority, and purpose in Christ.**

A. Jesus came at Father's sending (John 5:24, 30, 36, 6:29) to lead us back home to Father.

**II. God the Son is the *bridge* (priest/mediator/way) to God the Father (John 14:6; 17:3 etc.) who is the source of all life.**

A. There is only one supreme issue: are you received by the Father in Christ?

B. Father "begot" Jesus (John 1:14, 5:26, 6:57, 20:17; Galatians 4:4; Psalm 2:7-8) as His only Son so as to adopt the rest of us into Father's house (Galatians 4:5-7).

1. Jesus taught us that Father is His head and His God (John 14:28; 1 Corinthians 11:3) and that He is under the Father's supreme authority.

2. We have peace only because Father has accepted us into His family in Christ (Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; Galatians 1:3; Colossians 1:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3).

3. Jesus came to re-unite us with our Father, removing the curse of a divided family (Malachai 4:4-6) and to receive us home (Luke 15 - The Prodigal Son).

4. Jesus taught us to pray to Father (Matthew 6:9), not Himself, and the Church Fathers begin the major creeds with, "I believe in God the Father Almighty..."

### III. Our Heavenly Father only relates to us “in Christ.”

A. Our salvation is “in Christ,” which means Father cannot know us in terms of relating to us—except as our lives, thoughts, and actions are in Christ’s Spirit.

1. Paul showed us this in Galatians 4:9: *But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?*

2. Father’s holiness cannot fellowship with sin because He is light with neither shadow or shade (James 1:18) and sin cannot enter His light. This is why even Jesus had to stand outside of His presence when He was forsaken by Father as a sin offering at calvary (Mark 15:34).

3. When we are practicing sin, we are out of His presence and re-enter only through forgiveness in Christ (which is constant).

4. Let me share something of a “presentation experience” I had in 1970 to God the Father.

B. Father, as the guardian of spiritual revelation, is the One who releases the Holy Spirit to take us into truth.

1. Father releases the revelation of Christ to the elect (Matthew 16:18; Romans 8:15).

2. The Father and Jesus release the Holy Spirit to us upon Father’s selection of election (Matthew 3:11; John 14:16-18, 16:7-14, 17:2, 6).

3. Relating to and glorifying the Father is not a threat to Jesus but rather His earnest delight!

C. God the Father is not a harsh Father who needs a gentle, mediating “mother” like Jesus to get in between Him and His children.

1. Father's exact character, love, and nature are revealed in Jesus of Nazareth (John 14:9; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:3 "the exact representation of His nature").
2. The fatherhood of God is perhaps the most misunderstood caricature under spiritual attack on the earth.

## Teaching Three

### Knowing Our Heavenly Father's Love as the Source of Life (Part II)

Let us look further at some of the Scripture's teaching on the attributes of our Heavenly Father (Galatians 4:1-2).

**I. He is the One who sets our course of disciplines, because of His love for our fellowship with Jesus made possible through Believers accepting their ruling responsibilities with Christ.**

A. We can only rule with Jesus (fellowship through qualification) if we have been purged by discipline (Romans 8:17).

B. Hebrews 12:1-5 is the classic text of the marks of our heavenly Father's love through the purging of our selfishness and immaturity.

C. The book of Proverbs is the text for a father's impartation of the wisdom of life to a son or daughter.

D. Our Father is the guardian of Christ's Church and the "pruner of the vines" (John 15:1-2).

**II. Father, as already mentioned, is the one to whom we pray, as we draw upon both the grace of our faith and Jesus' bank account on our behalf.**

A. The following Scriptures should help us to come to Daddy (*Abba*) in order to discover how to please Him and do His will:

**Matt. 6:1**      *Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.*

**Matt. 6:4**      *That your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*

- Matt. 6:6** *But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*
- Matt. 6:8** *Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him.*
- Matt. 6:9** *Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.*
- Matt. 6:18** *So that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*
- John 14:16** *And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever. (The Holy Spirit)*
- John 16:23,26** *And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name.*
- 1 John 3:1** *See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.*

### **III. Father is our source of protection, honor, worship, reward, and forgiveness.**

#### **A. Examples in Scripture:**

- Matt. 6:14** *For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

- Matt. 6:26** *Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?*
- Matt. 7:11** *If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is to those who ask Him!*
- Matt. 18:19** *Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.*
- Matt. 18:35** *So shall my heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.*
- Matt. 20:23** *He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on my right and on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father.*
- Matt. 26:53** *Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and He will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?*
- Luke 10:22** *All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.*
- Luke 12:30** *For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek, but your Father knows that you need these things.*

**Luke 23:34** *But Jesus was saying, “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.*

**John 4:34** *Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.”*

**John 6:37** *All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and the one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out.*

**John 6:45** *It is written in the prophets and they shall all be taught of God. Every one who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to me.*

**John 10:29** *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.*

B. It is Jesus, not Father, who will be our judge (John 5:22, 45).

#### **IV. Our Father has called us to be sons to Him rather than slaves to law, duty, or “obedience” (Galatians 4:7).**

A. Some of the differences between sons and servants are illustrated in Diagram Two:

## **Diagram Two**

### **Sons or Servants?**

#### **SONS**

1. See the law as family characteristics
2. Work for the benefit of the family
3. Have a “being” focus
4. Operate out of love

#### **SERVANTS**

1. See the law as an impartial standard of obedience
2. Work for wages or rewards
3. Have a “doing” focus
4. Operate out of duty

## Teaching Four

### Drawing From Our Natural Experiences

#### **I. Paul tells us that our natural families are the great “seminary” and qualifier for spiritual responsibility as church-family leadership.**

A. Good, natural fathers tend to make good spiritual fathers (1 Timothy 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).

1. Honoring our fathers and mothers (the 4th commandment) teaches us to become honorable fathers and mothers ourselves.

2. Because God’s people are a family, relating to them as “parishioners,” “sheep,” “assignments,” etc. is playing into the building of religious corporations rather than spiritual family.

3. Relating generationally through our fathers gives us an anchor of meaning and of history (Isaiah 51:2; Matthew 3:9; Luke 1:73; Romans 4:16).

B. Unfortunately, many of us have to work hard to overcome negative relationships with a natural father as an obstacle in relating in a healthy way to our heavenly Father (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21).

1. This is why it is so critical to stand in the sovereignty of God. What is He working in you as a result of the natural father He gave you?

2. Spiritual “fathers” (1 Corinthians 4:15), therefore, have a significant responsibility to represent God’s Fatherhood to whom they give care.

#### **II. For most of us who are natural fathers or mothers, we are on a journey from being “sons” and “brothers” to becoming spiritual fathers and mothers.**

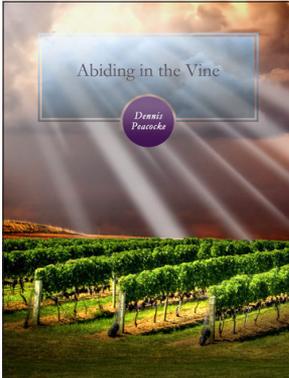
A. Henri Nouwen has written a powerful book

titled, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, which deals with this journey.

1. The cover of both Nouwen's book and this series portray Rembrandt's painting, "Return of the Prodigal."
  2. The life journey of standing in the understanding of the rebel son, the obedient son, and the father is a picture worth a thousand words.
- B. Our Heavenly Father has already received us in Christ, anxiously waiting to place a robe and ring upon us and celebrate our return with a feast.
1. What obstacles in ourselves of unbelief, ignorance, and fear have we created for Him?
  2. What must we do to change this so as to receive Him and fellowship with Him until we hear or feel Him say, "Behold my beloved son/daughter in whom I am well pleased?"



## RELATED RESOURCES



### ***Abiding in the Vine*** by Dennis Peacocke

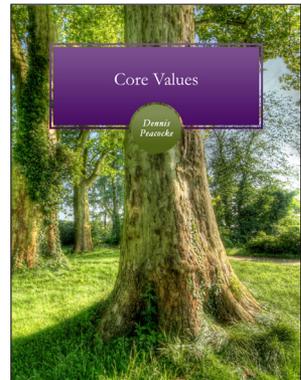
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