

Daddy's Girl

By Megan L. Anderson

“Daddy’s girl” described nobody better than me as a little kid. If my dad was woodworking in the garage, I was pestering him into teaching me to handle power tools. If he washed his pickup, you’d find me chattering away in the truck bed. When he came home from work, I was bouncing up and down at the door excited to see him . . . and about searching his coat pockets for packets of Sixlets candy. I remember laughing as he’d pick me up like a dumbbell for bench presses, let me stand on his feet for a dance, and teach me to fly kites. He was funny, strong, and full of surprises – the best dad ever!

As I got older, though, our relationship shifted. Our once fun and affectionate dynamic turned tense and hurtful. For a several years we didn’t share much of a relationship at all. So when my dad took the initiative to teach me how to drive, you can imagine I was more than a little doubtful we’d get along. Him. Me. Confined space. Bad idea. But to my surprise he was a patient and encouraging teacher. When I forgot to switch on the turn signal, he offered gentle reminders. When I parked straight, he was quick to praise. When I didn’t know where to go or what to do, he calmly directed me. My expectations of harsh criticism and impatience were relieved by reassurance and support.

How often do I project negative expectations on my Heavenly Father like I did my earthy one? It can be hard believing God doesn’t brood over my mistakes or feel disappointed in me. I don’t always trust that he truly loves who I am right now instead of just biding his time until I pull myself together and become “good enough” – whatever that looks like. The danger of thinking like that is it distracts from seeing what God is really like. It’s easy letting experiences

and relationships with other people color how I view him, but when I hold those expectations up to the light of scripture, I find the truth of his love.

When I fear the Lord's feelings have changed toward me he says, "I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed" (Malachi 3:6). When I think God has given up on me his word offers confidence that "He who began a good work in [me] will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). When I feel unimportant and that nobody cares, my Heavenly Father promises, "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). For every lie and doubt I carry toward God, the bible proves his love, compassion, and mercy over and over.

Sometimes earthly dads are superheroes we think can do no wrong; other times they're supervillains breaking our hearts. The thing is earthly dads are human. They're flawed and they fail. Our Heavenly Father, though, is perfect. He's reliable and looks after our hearts. He not only desires our love, he wants to love on us more than any earthly parent ever could – and that's never going to change. He doesn't just tolerate us because he has to. He chose us, adopting us into his family through giving up his only son Jesus as sacrifice for our sins.

The apostle Paul wrote, "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15). *Abba* isn't a casual word for dad. It's a name used only for a father you love deeply and depend on, and who intensely loves you too. Imagine a little girl falling down and scraping her knee who cries out "Daddy!" She knows he'll scoop her up and make it all better because she trusts his love for her. That's what it means for God to be our

Abba. Whether our earthly dads are around or not, whether they lift us up or talk us down, we have a perfect Heavenly Father longing for us to be his daddy's girls.