

Fathers

As I sit down to write this article, it is Fathers' Day. On Father's Day, people often spend time with their fathers, have meals together, engage in activities they enjoy, or give thoughtful gifts. It is a time to acknowledge and celebrate the love, support, guidance, and sacrifices that fathers make for their children and families.

The origins of Father's Day can be traced back to the early 20th century in the United States. In 1909, a woman named Sonora Smart Dodd was listening to a sermon on Mother's Day when she came up with the idea of creating a day to honour fathers. Dodd's father had raised her and her siblings alone after her mother's death, and she wanted to recognise his hard work and dedication.

Dodd's proposal was met with enthusiasm, and the first Father's Day was celebrated in Spokane, Washington, on June 19, 1910. Over time, the holiday gained popularity across the United States, and in 1972, President Richard Nixon signed a proclamation making Father's Day a national holiday.

The tradition of celebrating Father's Day gradually spread to other countries, including the United Kingdom. However, the holiday did not become an official holiday in the UK until much later. In fact, it wasn't until 1972 that Father's Day was officially recognised in the UK, where it is celebrated on the third Sunday in June.

It's worth noting that while Father's Day is a joyous occasion for many, it can also be a difficult day for those who have lost their fathers, have strained relationships with them or long to become fathers but fail in that ambition for whatever reason.

Throughout the Bible, God is a Father figure but the picture is confused because the various authors of the Hebrew Bible, obviously had the same wide variety of fatherly role models as we have today. The all powerful, aggressive, argumentative verging on abusive father figure contrasts with the compassionate, all loving, admirable ambassador of peace. Real life fathers can show all the qualities of both types of the Biblical Heavenly Father, sometimes in the same day or even hour, given enough provocation, but usually there is a dominant paternal pattern of behaviour that they revert to!

In the New Testament, Jesus' Heavenly Father is clearly predominantly the benevolent, compassionate type of father, but some Christians choose to ignore this and worship the omnipotent, angry, judgemental God, found in places in the Hebrew Bible.

As a Christian, are you forever looking over your shoulder, fearful of what punishment is just around the corner for not living up to the impossibly high standards that God expects of you? It was the same in Jesus day! The religious authorities imposed such a comprehensive and strict set of religious rules and regulations, that they said God demanded, that it was impossible to keep all of them without contravening nearly 30% of them. Jesus often came into conflict with the religious authorities, because of this. The rules His Father expects to be followed are written within us, not imposed from outside. They are followed as an expression of love and appreciation for the care and love shown to us by our Heavenly Father, just as we show by gifts of food, drink or material goods, our appreciation of our earthly fathers.

Though this will be read weeks or months after Fathers' Day, it is not too late to celebrate your ever present Heavenly Father, and the love and compassion He shows. Our Heavenly Father delights in us and gladly listens to all our prayers. When we find that He doesn't always give us what we ask for, it doesn't mean that this is not true. What wise and loving earthly father lets his toddler go off alone on a bicycle or borrow his woodworking tools? Nor would he let his child try to rearrange his chess board part way through a game! Be assured, however your prayers are answered, you are precious in your Heavenly Father's sight, wherever you go and whatever circumstance you find yourself in. Amen

Roger Newton