MINISTÈRE DU PASTEUR CLÉMENT SALOMON · BIBLE STUDY #20

The Father Who Runs to You

You may be afraid of what God thinks of you. Jesus came to show you His face.

"Papa, I am not worthy to be your son."

Jean-Robert said the sentence again. Then again. He said it on the plane from Boston. He said it in the tap-tap from Port-au-Prince. He said it under his breath on the back of a motorcycle taxi bouncing down the road to Les Cayes.

He was twenty-eight. He had not seen his father in eleven years.

At seventeen, after a loud fight, he had opened the old biscuit tin where Papa Elie, a mason, kept the money for the roof. He took all of it. He left before sunrise and never called. Not once.

Now his sister had sent a short message: *"Papa asks about you every Sunday."* Jean-Robert did not know what that meant. Was Papa still angry? Did he want his money? Would he even open the gate?

The motorcycle turned onto the dirt road. Far ahead, at the gate of the little house, Jean-Robert saw a gray-haired man stand up from a chair.

What happened next? Hold on to that question. Because there is a bigger question underneath it — one that every one of us carries: **When I come back to God, what kind of Father will I find?**

What picture do you have of God?

Close your eyes for a moment and picture God. What do you see?

Many people see a stern judge with a long list. Some see a boss who is too busy for them. Some see their own father — and for some of us, that picture hurts. A father who drank. A father who

left. A father who only spoke to shout.

One night a disciple named Philip said what many of us feel:

> *"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."*
>
> **John 14:8-9 (KJV)**

Do you want to know what the Father is like? Look at Jesus. Look at Him touching the sick. Look at Him lifting children onto His knees. Look at Him crying at a friend's grave. Jesus said: *that* is what My Father is like.

The Father Himself loves you

Some people think it works like this: the Father is angry, and Jesus has to beg Him to be kind to us. Jesus said the opposite:

> *"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."*
>
> **John 16:27 (KJV)**

Read those words slowly: *"the Father **himself**."* Not only Jesus. Not only the Holy Spirit. The Father Himself.

And the most famous verse in the Bible says where the plan of salvation started:

> *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*
>
> **John 3:16 (KJV)**

Who gave? The Father. The cross was not Jesus changing the Father's mind. The cross was the Father and the Son giving together — because they love you.

> The Father is not the problem Jesus came to fix. **The Father is the One who sent Him.**

God is love

The Bible does not only say God is *loving*, the way a person is sometimes kind. It says something deeper:

> *"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."*
>
> **1 John 4:8 (KJV)**

Love is not one of God's moods. It is who He is. And John adds something wonderful: *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us"* (1 John 4:10). He did not wait for you to love Him first. He started.

That is why John could write with wonder: *"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1 John 3:1). Sons and daughters. Not servants. Not visitors. Children.

What God says about Himself

Long ago, Moses asked to see God's glory. God answered by telling Moses His name — who He really is:

> *"And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."*
>
> **Exodus 34:6 (KJV)**

Merciful. Gracious. *Longsuffering* — that means slow to get angry. Full of goodness and truth. When God describes Himself, these are the first words He chooses.

And He does not change. James calls Him *"the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). People have good days and bad days. The Father does not.

Better than the best father

Jesus knew that many fathers fail. So He said this:

> *"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"*
>
> **Matthew 7:11 (KJV)**

Think of the kindest father you have ever known. Now hear Jesus say: *how much more.*

And if your own father hurt you or left you, God speaks to you very gently. He uses the strongest love we know on earth — a mother with her baby — and says His love is stronger still: *"Can a woman forget her sucking child…? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee"* (Isaiah 49:15). The Father in heaven is not a copy of the father you had. He is the Father you always needed.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sums up what the Bible teaches this way: God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer and Sovereign of all, and the same love and power we see in the Son and the Holy Spirit are in the Father too (Fundamental Belief #3).

The father who ran

Now we come to the story Jesus told — maybe the most loved story He ever told. A young man asked his father for his share of the money, left for a far country, and wasted it all (Luke 15:11-13). Hungry and alone, feeding pigs, he made a plan. He even wrote a little speech in his head: *"Father, I have sinned… make me as one of thy hired servants"* (Luke 15:18-19).

Then he started walking home. Watch what the father does:

> *"And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him."*
>
> **Luke 15:20 (KJV)**

The son walked. The father **ran**.

Look at the words. *"A great way off"* — the father saw him from far away. That means he was watching the road. *"Had compassion"* — his heart broke open. *"Fell on his neck, and kissed him"* — before the son was washed, before he said a word.

The son started his speech. But the father did not let him reach the part about the hired servants. He called out: bring the best robe, a ring for his hand, shoes for his feet. *"For this my*

son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:22-24).

Jesus told this story to show us the Father. Not a father who waits with crossed arms. A Father who runs.

What happened at the gate

So what happened on that dirt road near Les Cayes?

The gray-haired man at the gate was Papa Elie. He was seventy now, with a bad knee and a cane. But when he saw who was on the back of that motorcycle, he dropped the cane and started down the road — half walking, half running, his old sandals slapping the dust.

Jean-Robert jumped off. "Papa, I am not worthy—"

He never finished. Papa Elie grabbed his son's face with both rough hands and pulled him in, right there in the road, in front of the neighbors. He was crying. He kept saying one word: "Pitit mwen. Pitit mwen." *My child. My child.*

That night, Jean-Robert tried again. "Papa, the money in the tin—"

The old man shook his head. "I fixed the roof long ago. Every Sunday I sat at that gate, and I asked God for only one thing: to see you come down that road before I die." Then he smiled. "Your room is still there. I never gave it away."

If an earthly father with a bad knee can run like that — how much more your Father in heaven? You do not need a perfect speech. You only need to start walking home. He is already running toward you.

Before you close this — one question

Have you been afraid of God? Have you stayed far away because you think He is angry, or because you are ashamed of what you did?

The Father is watching the road for you. Jesus came to show you His face. We would be honored to pray with you, open the Bible with you, and walk with you as you come home — just as you are, with no speech needed.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, study the Bible, or go deeper on this topic? Reach us today:

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Don't miss what's next. Many of us grew up afraid — of curses, of spirits, of what someone might "send" against us. The Bible says *"greater is he that is in you"* (1 John 4:4). Our next study: *"Growing in Christ: Free from Fear."* Subscribe now so it reaches you the moment it's out. If you wait, you'll have to come find it. 🔔

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Viewer Handout

The Father Who Runs to You — pocket version

5 truths to remember

1. If you want to know what the Father is like, look at Jesus: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).
2. The Father Himself loves you — Jesus did not have to talk Him into it. He is the One who gave His Son (John 16:27; John 3:16).
3. God is love, and He loved us first (1 John 4:8, 10); He calls us His children (1 John 3:1).
4. God describes Himself as merciful, gracious, slow to anger and full of goodness and truth — and He does not change (Exodus 34:6; James 1:17).
5. Like the father in the parable, He sees you while you are "yet a great way off" and runs to welcome you home (Luke 15:20-24; Matthew 7:11).

Memory verse

> *"For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."*
>
> **John 16:27 (KJV)**

Think & pray about it

- What picture of God did I grow up with? Does it look like Jesus?
- Is there a "speech" I keep rehearsing before I dare to come to God? What does Luke 15:20 say to me about it?
- Who in my life needs to hear that the Father is running toward them? How can I tell them this week?

FOR TEACHERS & SMALL GROUPS

Presenter Bullet Sheet

- **Open with the story** (an illustrative story: Jean-Robert returns to Les Cayes after eleven years with a rehearsed apology; a gray-haired man stands up at the gate) — ask: "When you think of coming back to God, what do you expect to find?"
- **Point 1 — What picture do you have of God?** John 14:8-9. To know the Father, look at Jesus. Be gentle: for some listeners the word "father" carries pain.
- **Point 2 — The Father Himself loves you:** John 16:27; John 3:16. Jesus does not persuade an unwilling Father; the Father sent the Son.
- **Point 3 — God is love:** 1 John 4:8, 10; 1 John 3:1. He loved first; we are called His children.
- **Point 4 — What God says about Himself:** Exodus 34:6; James 1:17. Merciful, gracious, slow to anger — and unchanging.
- **Point 5 — Better than the best father:** Matthew 7:11; Isaiah 49:15. "How much more." Reference Adventist Fundamental Belief #3, "God the Father," in the Church's own words.
- **Point 6 — The father who ran:** Luke 15:11-24, focus on verse 20 ("a great way off… ran… kissed him") and verses 22-24 (robe, ring, shoes). The son walked; the father ran. The son's confession is real (v. 21) — love does not ignore sin, it welcomes the sinner home.
- **Close the story:** Papa Elie drops his cane, "Pitit mwen," "Your room is still there."
- **Appeal:** invite each person to stop rehearsing and start walking — to speak to God as "Our Father" (Matthew 6:9) right now, and to thank Him that He loved them first.
- **Close:** memory verse (John 16:27) + "He is already running toward you" + tease the next study ("Growing in Christ: Free from Fear").

EVIDENCE-BASED · FACT-CHECKED

10 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact (with Bible)
1. The Father is harsh; only Jesus is kind.	Jesus said, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). The kindness of Jesus shows the heart of the Father.
2. Jesus had to convince the Father to love us.	"For the Father himself loveth you" (John 16:27). "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16) — the Father gave.
3. God loves me only after I start loving Him.	"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).
4. I have to clean up my life before I can come home to God.	"When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran" (Luke 15:20). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).
5. If my earthly father failed me, God will fail me too.	"How much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11). "They may forget, yet will I not forget thee" (Isaiah 49:15).
6. God is quick to get angry and hard to please.	God calls Himself "merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).
7. God's love changes with His mood, like people's.	He is "the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17).
8. If God is love, sin does not matter to Him.	The returning son confessed, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight" (Luke 15:21), and God sent His Son "to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Love deals with sin — at great cost — and brings us home.
9. Calling God "Father" is only a figure of speech; He is not personal.	Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father which art in heaven" (Matthew 6:9), and "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

10. Since God is so loving, I can stay "in the far country" and come back whenever I like.	The father's joy was over a son who "arose, and came" (Luke 15:20); "he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:24). Love invites us to come home now, not someday.

Where this comes from (Sources)

This study is built on the Bible and reflects the published beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Verify everything for yourself:

- The Bible — passages on God the Father and His love: Exodus 34:6; Isaiah 49:15; Matthew 6:9; 7:9-11; Luke 15:11-24; John 3:16; 14:8-9; 16:27; Romans 5:8; James 1:17; 1 John 3:1; 4:4, 8-10 (King James Version, public domain).
- Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #3, "God the Father" — official beliefs: https://adventist.org/beliefs (please read the statement there in full, in the Church's own words).
- 28 Fundamental Beliefs (2020 edition, PDF): https://adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: https://gc.adventist.org/
- Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, chapter 1, "God's Love for Man," and *Christ's Object Lessons*, chapter "Lost, and Is Found" (on Luke 15), public domain: https://whiteestate.org/ / https://m.egwwritings.org/
- Related studies in this library: *"Who Is Jesus?"*, *"The Trinity: One God"* and *"Christ Our High Priest"* — https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/resources.html · Questions? https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/faq.html · Faith Journey: https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/journey.html

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