

February 25, 2008

TURN A CORNER!

“Abba, Father,” Jesus prayed in the garden, “not what I will, but what you will” (Mark 14:36).

All those words are English (in the original, all were Greek) except one: that little Aramaic word “Abba.” Why the switch?

The role of the father in the Greek-Roman world was similar to ours today: you raised a son for a few years and then you released him to independence. But “abba” switched cultures; it reached back to the Israelite world, where the father’s responsibility to love, guide, care for, correct and command his sons was lifelong, and the sons’ responsibility to trust him and obey him was lifelong.

And which style of fathering is God’s? You know! He isn’t a Greek-Roman-Westernized Father; He doesn’t start us out and then turn us loose. He is Abba Father, Who stays lovingly connected to us all our lives, and Who expects us to reciprocate all our lives.

Better interpretations never translate “Abba” as “Daddy,” a children’s word; Hebrew grown-up sons and daughters used “Abba,” too. It spoke most strongly of relationship, of connection – and not a casually familiar one, but deep and bonded and trusting. When you call Him “Abba” you’re really acknowledging that you’re His own authentic child and answerable to Him, in love and loyalty and obedience.

“Abba” is a Gethsemane word. “Not what I will....”

Both the books of Romans and Galatians say that it’s by the Spirit that we cry “Abba, Father.” And we do need the Spirit’s strengthening to call Him that. It’s a heavy-duty word: it implies total commitment, no matter what.

The God of Gethsemane, Who is your Abba Father, can ask you for anything – because He gives you everything in return.

Will you bow the knee and promise that from now on He’s your Abba? You just turned a corner.