

# **“OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN”**

**Pastor Mike Corwin**

**TEXT: ACTS 17: 22-31**

**SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4: 1-7**

## **I – MAURY POVICH:**

I’ve told you before that I don’t watch a whole lot of television, but sometimes I’ll sit down for a few minutes and do the man thing of rapidly flipping through the channels without really watching any of them. There is an afternoon talk show, which has caught my attention on occasion, and I’ve spent some time looking at...THE MAURY POVICH SHOW. It appears that the whole show is based around various women coming on and accusing different men of being the father of their children. The show compares the DNA of the child to that of the suspected father to prove or disprove paternity. I think they should rename it the “WHO’S YO DADDY SHOW.”

There was one woman there who was testing the 12<sup>th</sup> man and still hadn’t found the father! And that test came back negative too! I love their reactions when this happens, they break down crying and run off stage in deep sorrow, chased by Maury and his crew who hug them and show them all kinds of sympathy. I’m thinking if you’ve tested 12 different men as possible daddy material that you should be crying over yourself! You obviously have some serious problems.

I want to ask the question...what about the children? Who’s going to show them the needed love and sympathy? I’m guessing a mother who has to test over a dozen men to find the father of her baby has issues already, let alone raising a child alone. How about this child, or children as the case may be, who will be raised and never know who their father is. Never have a father to turn to in their time of questioning, in their time of need, or for any other reason. Who will be their dad?

## **II – SEARCHING FOR GOD:**

As you look around you realize that there are a vast number of people who are searching for their Heavenly Father the same way these people are searching for their earthly fathers. They know there’s something out there, but they don’t know who or what this something is. There are those who look for the answer in a bottle or illicit drugs. They look for it in the arms of anyone who will hold them. They immerse themselves in work or play. Anything to seek this

satisfaction, this sense of love that can really only come from one source. Our children join gangs or go on the Internet trying to find it.

Numerous fad religions have come to the forefront trying to fill this void like Wicca, the people who killed themselves a few years ago to ride the Hale Bopp comet into space, or those who worship crystals. How about the singer Madonna's Kabbalah, which is an offshoot of Judaism that has meditative, devotional, mystical, and magical teachings. And then there's actor Tom Cruise who wants everyone to become a Scientologist, which is a religion, founded in 1951 by the science fiction writer Ron Hubbard. They are all testing to find their God...their Heavenly Father. We could change the Country Western song title and say they're looking for God in all the wrong places.

Let me proclaim to you this morning, I know who it is they search for. I know who it is that is our Heavenly Father, our Creator, our Maker, our Sustainer, our ALL in ALL, the Great I AM. And let me further proclaim that you are his children as Paul pointed out in Galatians this morning. The only blood test I have to take is the one found in Jesus on the cross, that's the DNA for a child of God. Once I find Jesus I am a child of God! With this God it doesn't matter who my earthly father is. In Psalm 27:10 it says:

“Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.”

### **III – SCRIPTURE – ACTS 17:22-31:**

This searching is nothing new. In the history of the early church as recorded by Luke in the book of Acts we find a story about people who were searching for their God, their heavenly father in the time of Paul as well...

#### **Acts 17:22 - 31 (NLT)**

<sup>22</sup>So Paul, standing before the council, addressed them as follows: “Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, <sup>23</sup>for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: ‘To an Unknown God.’ This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I’m telling you about. <sup>24</sup>“He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn’t live in man-made temples, <sup>25</sup>and human hands can’t serve his needs—for he has no needs. He himself gives life and breath to everything, and he satisfies every need. <sup>26</sup>From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. <sup>27</sup>“His purpose was for the nations to seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him—though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup>For in him we live and move and exist. As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ <sup>29</sup>And since this is true, we shouldn’t think of God as an idol designed by craftsmen from gold or silver or stone. <sup>30</sup>“God overlooked people’s ignorance about these things in

earlier times, but now he commands everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and turn to him. <sup>31</sup>For he has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead.”

Up until this time Paul’s travels had taken him to the people who already knew the same God that Paul had worshipped and he was there to proclaim the works of God through Jesus the Messiah. But Paul now finds himself in a place that didn’t know the God Paul knew. He had been in the cities filled with common folks, now he found himself in a college town, full of learned people, people who spent their days gathered together trying to come up with new ideas that no one had ever thought of before. Athens is the culture that spawned great thinkers like Plato. Athens was also the heart of the very best of Pagan culture. To Paul it was a wasteland of idols.

There are statutes and altars to numerous gods all over the city. The people knew there was something out there bigger than them, and they had the impulse to worship, but the object of their worship was wrong. They had no idea who their heavenly Father was.

So Paul tells them. He tells them he has noticed the Altar they have erected to the unknown God and says he now wishes to proclaim this God to them. He then establishes the fact that this is “THE GOD” the maker and creator of everything. This is the supreme God, the one with a capital G, not a small g like all the other gods they were worshipping. This is the God who didn’t stay aloof and related to his people only through images made of gold, silver, or stone. This is the God who through his only Son Jesus, put on skin, came to earth, and was sacrificed to atone for our sins so that we could be called his children. And God proved who he was and authenticated it all through the resurrection of his Son, and because we are his children through Jesus, we too shall see the resurrection ourselves.

Paul was saying, you have a God in heaven who wants each and every one of you to call him Father, and he sent his only Son to make that possible.

#### **IV – OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN:**

When the disciple’s asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he established who it is we should worship and turn to in the very first line of the model prayer he gave them that day. The first line of “our Father who is in Heaven” is full of information:

#1 – Jesus says it’s “OUR” Father, Ours - yours and mine, the Father of males and females, adults and children. The Father of blacks, whites, reds, yellows or any other color his children show. The Father of Americans, Europeans, Africans, Asians, or any other race of people. He is “OUR” Father and wants every person ever born to figure that out and turn to him.

#2 – He is our Father. He’s not an uncle or an aunt or a cousin twice removed. He is the God who gave you life, who formed you in your mother’s womb and breathed life into you. He’s the one who watches over you and knows what you’re going to do before you do it. He’s the one who lets you make your own choices even when he knows they’re not the best ones, in the hopes the results will turn you to him. He’s the one who will never leave you nor forsake you as an earthly parent can do. He is always there.

#3 – He’s Supreme. He isn’t our father from Ohio or Wisconsin. We don’t pray to the president in Washington, or start our prayers with “my teacher who art in school. We want the God in heaven. By saying our Father is in heaven, we recognize that God has a power greater than ours. When we pray we want a big God and a big Savior to help us with our big problems. We want to pray to a big God in a big Place for big results. We want our Father in heaven.

### **V – A PERSONAL FATHER:**

When we pray we want it to be heard by a personal God, a personal Father. That’s the God Jesus was talking and teaching about to the disciples that day. When he taught them to pray the word he used for Father was the Aramaic word “ABBA.” The English translation of this word isn’t Father it’s Daddy. There’s just something about it being translated this way that touches my heart. When my kids were growing up and they were hurt or needed me they didn’t cry out “FATHER”...they cried out “DADDY.” We’ve been trained to say Father, but I think this word Daddy more appropriately conveys the relationship God wants to have with me and I want to have with God. It makes it personal.

There’s a story about a little boy who was standing on the banks of the Mississippi river waving at a big paddleboat as it floated down the river. He was waving for the Captain to bring the boat to shore where he was standing. A passerby stopped and chuckled as he told the boy he was wasting his time and energy, the big boat would never stop for him. Just as he finished saying it the big boat turned sharply and sailed towards the spot on the bank where the boy was standing. The little boy looked at the stranger and through his missing front teeth said, “The captain is my daddy.”

That’s what’s going on when we start the Lord’s Prayer with “Our Father who is in Heaven.” The Captain of the universe turns toward us as he sees our wave and hears our plea, “Daddy, come here.” Our Father makes it personal.

AMEN