



CREATOR

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FATHER'S TOUCH

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives its name (Ephesians 3:14-15).

To My Cherished Friend,

I wonder how many people see our Heavenly Father as a “bad parent?” It pains me to ask this question! Perhaps they once believed in the God of the Bible, but they look at the condition of the world today—with its wars and poverty—and conclude that the Creator must have “gone on vacation.”

Those with this view of God tragically believe that He no longer cares for us. In their mind, God is no better than a parent who sends a “Get Well” card to their seriously-ill child, instead of visiting them at the hospital. This idea of our Heavenly Father is grossly wrong! It sees Earth adrift in a sea of suffering with no one to watch over it, *as if the world could survive on its own.*

I am writing to encourage you that God is a wonderful Father Who is vigilant on our behalf night and day (please read Psalm 139). And if we plumb the depths of creation, we will see the fatherly care of God among all creatures. His concern reaches down to the lowliest of animals, and, oh, how this magnifies His love for us! If God faithfully sustains the birds of the Earth and the worms on which they feed, how much more does He care for those made in His image (Matthew 6:25-34)? It is true that our world is buffeted by the waves of relentless wickedness, but every one of our Father's creations, every flower and every mountain, continues to respond with joy to its Creator.

The Bible clearly teaches that our Heavenly Father made all things through Jesus, His Son: “For by [Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth...all things were created by Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16). The Bible also teaches us that Christ is the radiance of His Father's glory, “sustaining all things by His powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3).

Therefore, we should see more than the “fingerprints” of God in nature—more than divine smudges on the face of the Earth. He hasn't left the nitty-gritty details of life to be someone else's concern. No, the nurturing “hands” of our Heavenly Father are always at work in creation through His Son (John 5:17). Even a brief exploration of Christ's handiwork will reveal the dynamic character of His Father (John 10:30, 38; Ephesians 3:14-15).

It is my joy today to show you that this is true! We're going to look at our Heavenly Father's lovingkindness demonstrated in animals. (After we're done, hopefully we'll have a deeper appreciation of how much He cares for us!) But it might surprise you which of Christ's creatures reveals our *Father's touch*. Let's take a look.

*Sea horse
father giving
birth*



THE RED FOX

Many creatures care for their young after they're born, but usually it's the mother that feeds and protects the babies. It's curious, then, that of all mammals the infamous **red fox** (*Vulpes vulpes*) should be so Father-like. Why do I say this?

Fox are frequently blamed for missing chickens, outbreaks of rabies, and poor pheasant hunting. They have been described as shifty and sly, and their unsavory character has led to insult. A dishonest person is "clever as a fox," and someone cheated out of something has been "outfoxed." Even Jesus painted a less-than-glowing portrait of these animals when He called the wicked king Herod a fox (Luke 13:32). God is sovereign, however, and has chosen to reveal His Fatherly ways in this creature!



Red fox dad

Throughout North America, Europe, North Africa, and Asia the red fox lives and roams. Foxes have very strong family ties. In late winter, the mother and father fox together locate a home for their pups-to-be (a place known as the **den**). This is a carefully chosen spot. A fox den is usually located in a meadow, river bank, hollow tree, or rocky bluff, or near the edge of a forest, and is well-protected by vegetation or surrounding water. Mom and Dad do not want their babies to fall victim to predators!

A fox den has several openings to provide easy access and escape. The main entrance slopes downward

several feet—usually three to four feet (approximately one meter) underground. Some dens are built as deep as 12 to 15 feet (4 to 5 meters) below the surface! Underground tunnels may extend 20 or 30 feet (6 or 10 meters) in all directions and are connected to an enlarged chamber where the mother fox nurses newborn pups.

Typically, the red-fox mom becomes pregnant in January and births five furry fox babies in March. Just prior to giving birth, and up to two weeks afterward, the mother fox stops hunting and relies on Dad to bring her food, which he faithfully leaves at the entrance of the den.

Despite their bad reputation, red-fox pups are helpless when born and are really cute as they grow older. At birth, the eyes (and the ears) of the pups are closed shut. When they open, nine or ten days later, they sparkle with a lovely, baby-blue hue. Their eyes change from blue to amber by two months of age. (If we are diligent in our study of creation, Jesus will faithfully reveal His Father's creative touch!) This is also the time when the pups are weaned from Mom's milk.

Mirroring the love of our Heavenly Father, the father fox will defend his pups at all costs. Some male foxes have been known to fend off full-grown grizzly bears trying to get at their children. What dedication!

One month after they're born, the pups begin to venture out of their den into the wide-open world. Both parents teach them to hunt as they get older, starting with easy prey such as grasshoppers.

Like all canines¹, fox pups love to play and roll in the dirt. They tirelessly chase each other around, nipping and biting at each others' heels. If one pup stops to rest, the others pounce on it in a free-for-all wrestling match. And it is not uncommon for the father fox to join in the play, chasing and being chased by the youngsters. A good father, he will also discipline his children if their play becomes too rough. He usually bares his teeth and growls at the rambunctious kids. (I wonder if I did this with my children when they were younger?!)

Mom and Dad stay with their pups through the summer, teaching them to hone their hunting skills and recognize danger. Eventually, the young foxes learn to hunt mice, voles, and rabbits on their own. They reach adult size in the fall and move away from home by six months of age.

The red fox has earned a bad reputation, yet it clearly reveals our Heavenly Father's wonderful character. Our sovereign Lord Jesus has chosen to demonstrate the faithfulness of His Father in the fox. Yet, that's not all...

¹ Canines are mammals in the dog family. This includes pet dogs, wolves, jackals, coyotes, hyenas, and foxes.

THE EMPEROR PENGUIN

It is well known that birds make very good parents. Canada geese, for instance, often allow their young goslings to ride on their backs when they are in the water. This keeps the youngsters warm, and safe from large fish (e.g., Northern pike and muskie).

Of all birds, however, there is probably no greater reflection of our Heavenly Father's undying dedication than among *male emperor penguins*.² In March and April, emperor penguins come ashore to have babies. The parents waddle as many as 50 miles on the Antarctic ice to reach their traditional breeding sites. Once there, Mom lays a single egg, which she keeps with her for the first hour; she then passes it along to Dad. The father penguin balances the prized egg on his webbed feet, and covers it with his feathered and somewhat plump belly. (You know, I think I would make a really good penguin if



Emperor penguin with chick

only I had feathers!) The father emperor penguin then spends the next *two months* patiently protecting and incubating the egg, while Mom goes back to sea in search of food.

It is now the dead of winter in Antarctica (June), and Dad must endure long, lonely, black nights. He huddles in the darkness with other fathers to keep from freezing. He battles frequent blizzards, enduring temperatures that plunge to 75 degrees below zero and winds that tear at 100 mph (160 kph)! Each father

² Like all penguins, the emperor penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*) cannot fly. But Jesus gave them great agility in the water. Emperor penguins live three-quarters of their lives in the ocean!

faithfully keeps the egg pressed against his body, never leaving it alone, even for a moment. The outside temperature may be brutal, yet the embrace of its faithful father keeps the unborn chick snugly warm (95° F. or 35° C.).

The female penguin eventually returns home—frequently Mom comes back the same day the egg hatches. With her invisible Creator as her Guide, she is able to find her mate among the thousands of penguins at the rookery. Once reunited, the egg (or chick) is gently passed from father to mother. By this time, Dad has gone over four months without food. It's now his turn to eat.³ He sets out for the ocean and spends a month dining on seafood, again fattening his tummy. The male penguin then returns home to help Mom.

During the first 40 to 50 days after hatching, one of the two parents is with their chick at all times. Mom and Dad take turns feeding the ravenous fledgling regurgitated fish. (You know, ignorance is bliss!) When the young penguin is old enough, it follows the adults into the sea, where it spends the next five to eight years of its life.

Do you see our Father's hand revealed in the emperor penguin? Well, let's keep looking...

THE FROG

The Lord Jesus gave most reptiles and amphibians the ability to survive on their own from birth; thus little or no parenting is needed. Snakes, for instance, lay their eggs and then abandon them (the cobra is an exception). I believe that our Heavenly Father, however, has sovereignly selected some of the lower animals to exemplify His fatherliness.

Of all His creatures, frogs "take the cake" as the most unusual parents. You probably already know that frogs usually develop in water as tadpoles. But our incredibly inventive Lord has given a species of male frog in Chile (*Rhinoderma* sp.) a very bizarre habit—**he incubates eggs in his mouth**. Several kinds of frogs around the world lay their eggs, not in water, but on land—in rotting logs or underground burrows. And it's usually the male frog which looks after them. This Chilean frog places as many as 15 eggs into his mouth in order to protect them. The tadpoles transform into tiny frogs right there in his vocal sac. When they've fully developed and are ready to see the world, Dad simply opens his mouth wide, and out they hop! The ability of

³ An emperor penguin father can lose half of his body weight while brooding an egg!

the Chilean frog to gently incubate his youngsters in his vocal sac, without succumbing to the urge to swallow them, is unique among our Father's creatures!

Our Heavenly Father has also given an Australian frog something quite unusual: pockets, similar to the large pockets found in a pair of painter's pants. Instead of carrying spare change, the father of this rain-forest species uses his pockets to hide his young from predators.

Deep in Australia, the mother *hip pocket frog* (*Assa darlingtoni*) lays a mass of a dozen or more pearly-white eggs on the forest floor. Mom and Dad carefully oversee the developing eggs for the next 11 days. At the end of this time, the eggs start to hatch, and things get very interesting. Mom hops away, but Dad gently positions himself over the mass of squirming tadpoles (see picture above). These immature frogs are blind, but somehow they sense their father's presence. Using its strong tail, each tadpole wriggles its way into one of the slits located on the front of Dad's hind legs. Twelve hours are needed



Hip pocket frog

for all the tadpoles to enter the special pockets, but Dad is extremely patient. (I wonder where he got that trait?!) Once his pockets are full, he slowly and carefully hops off into the dark recesses of the rain forest.

Over the next seven weeks, the Lord Jesus transforms the hidden tadpoles into tiny frogs. When the time is right, the young frogs squeeze out of Dad's pockets, one at a time. This usually takes several days and, again, Dad is patient. As each youngster emerges, he or she simply hops away to be on their own.

THE SEA HORSE

We've now looked at mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, so let's also examine fish. Surely there is something of our Heavenly Father's character to be found among our scaly, wet friends?

There is, in fact, a fish that Christ has made that fits the bill, though it doesn't look much like a fish. It's the *sea horse*, a most unusual creature.

God covered the sea horse with an armor of bony plates. In some ways, it resembles a medieval knight. Unlike most fish, the sea horse swims upright and has a prehensile tail which it uses to grasp underwater objects.⁴ Unusual as this may be, the most fascinating thing about the kindly sea horse is its unique display of parenting. You see, it is the father of the sea horse that becomes pregnant!

The female sea horse lays approximately 200 eggs in a specially designed pouch located on the male's belly. (Uh oh, what do you think is going to happen to Dad's belly?) This pouch is akin to the pouch of a kangaroo. When she has finished laying her eggs, the mother sea horse then abandons the male. How sad!

The eggs soon hatch inside Dad, and he patiently watches his belly get larger over the next two to six weeks, depending on the type of sea horse.⁵ During this time, the tiny fry take oxygen and nourishment from their father's blood. Whether Dad feels his school of babies growing inside him, we don't know, but once they're ready to come out, he understands that it's time to give birth. Using his curled tail, he anchors himself to a frond of seaweed and begins to shake. One by one, tiny miniatures of the adult sea horse pop out of an opening at the top of his pouch (see front page), and soon, he is the proud father of 200 children. Wow, what else has our amazing God thought of?!

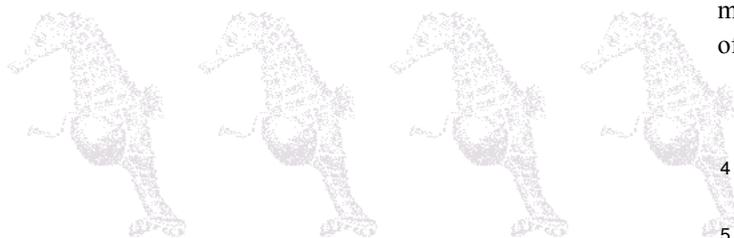
"BUGS"

We see the image of our Heavenly Father reflected in vertebrates.⁶ But what of the ruthless world of insects and the like, where strange and shadowy creatures live by the motto: "Eat or be eaten"? Surely we won't find the love of our Father here...or will we?

Among higher animals, nuclear families are

⁴ A prehensile tail is what a monkey has. Sea horses are not very good swimmers, so they use their curled tails to steady themselves in the ocean currents.

⁵ Jesus created 35 kinds of sea horses.



common (remember the red fox?). But do you think we can discover dedicated families among the things that give us the creeps? It just so happens that ***pill bugs*** make wonderful parents. Believe it or not, our Heavenly Father has taught them to care for one another!

Pill bugs (see the kids' kreation page) are usually found nestled under rocks and logs. They prefer the dark. Yet God has given these tiny creatures the courage to



Giant water bug father

gather food in the world of the light, and the desire to share the food with their children. When everyone in the pill-bug family has finished eating, the “kids” help Mom and Dad pick up. They all take the remains of their meal outside in order to keep their home clean. Why should these “bugs” be so selfless? Look at Who made them!¹⁷

Did you ever get a piggy-back ride from your dad when you were little? Well, some bugs give their children piggy-back rides for weeks on end. The male ***giant water bug*** (*Belostomatidae* sp.) willingly allows the female to attach dozens of eggs to his back. Using waterproof glue, the mother giant water bug neatly arranges them in tight rows on the surface of Dad's folded wings. By allowing her to do this, he is making a huge sacrifice: The eggs are heavy and he must now work hard to move about the pond in which he lives. Despite this, the male giant water bug regularly swims to the surface of the pond to ensure that his babies receive life-giving oxygen from the air. Each time he does, he proclaims the faithfulness of our Heavenly Father. The loaded-down dad cannot move as quickly as before, preventing him from catching food for himself. And he cannot fly to another pond until the eggs on his back have hatched. As I said, he makes a huge sacrifice for his children.

The male giant water bug carries his babies with him wherever he goes for an entire month! Sadly, he's on

1 Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, (Bethesda MD: Adler & Adler, 1986), 147.

2 ***Pupae***, pronounced PEW - pea, is plural for ***pupa*** (PEW - pah).

3 Peter Farb, *Insects*, (New York: Time Inc., 1962), 58.

his own, because Mom leaves shortly after laying her eggs. Then again, he's not alone—His fantastic Creator sees him through his labors!

[God] gently leads those that have young
(Isaiah 40:11).

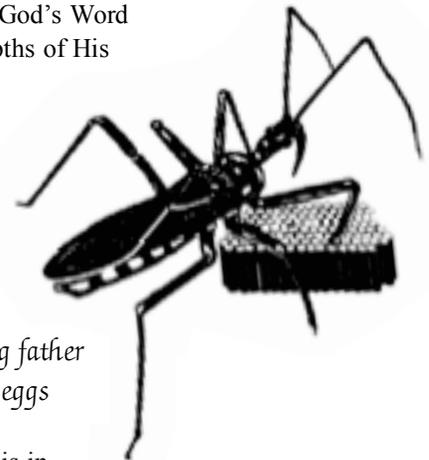
Without question, the “moms” of the animal world are the ones who usually protect their young. And surely it is God's Fatherliness that motivates and enables these mothers to be so concerned. But God's fatherly care among male insects is not rare.

The male ***assassin bug*** of Kenya (*Rhinocorristris*) vigilantly stands guard over the family's eggs. The mother assassin bug has recently deposited them on a nearby tropical plant. It's now up to Dad to straddle these eggs using his body as a living shield, protecting his young from lethal enemies such as parasitic wasps.

As for God, His way is perfect; the Word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him (Ps 18:30).

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

I've shared a couple verses of Scripture here at the end of our study for a reason. Some may see these passages as applying only to God's people—and maybe they do. But we should expect to see the truth of God's Word penetrating the depths of His creation! I firmly believe that creation loudly proclaims the vital knowledge of the One Who sustains all



Assassin bug father
guarding eggs

things. Our Father is in Heaven, but His hand is here on Earth. My Friend, I hope our study of nature today has illustrated this profound reality!



Do you not know? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood since the Earth was
founded? Isaiah 40:21

Do you want to know God the Father, the One Who made all stars (Isaiah 40:26) and all bugs? I must warn you, it takes humility! And if you truly desire to know God, then you must use all the gifts He has made available to you. I am going to present them in reverse order:

3) **Go out into creation**; turn off your cell phone, if you have one, and be absolutely still (Psalm 46:10). Use your **senses** to learn how nature reflects God's character.⁸ Get down on your hands and knees, and **examine** that beetle crawling across the ground or that spider spinning its web. What do they proclaim about God? **Listen**—what do you hear? Are the birds and the crickets singing songs to their Maker? **Smell** the sweetness of the Lord in the air around you. This is the same air that Jesus breathed and the very same air that He uses to keep all living things alive. **Taste** His goodness in the apple that you brought with you, and **touch** the things that can be felt out in nature. Go ahead—get dirty. If you want to discover the hidden treasures of His nature, you must be willing to be like a child!

2) **Love the Bible!** Read it every day and pray that God will bring to mind what He teaches you in His Word. Go to bed each night eager to wake up the next morning so that you might ponder in Scripture the great things Christ Jesus has done on Earth. Love the Word of God: study it, memorize it, meditate on it (Psalm 119:14-16)!

1) **Turn your eyes and your heart to Jesus** (Hebrews 12:2) and Him alone. No other religion will do. If you want to see God your Father, look to Jesus (John 14:9). It is with Jesus that our knowledge of God begins and ends, for it is Christ Who says:

I AM *the First and the Last* (Revelation 1:17).

You cannot know the One True God unless you intimately know Christ Jesus, God's Son. Why? Because all of us have infinitely offended God by our sins. And there's nothing we can do to erase these sins from His mind. After we die, our sins will forever separate us from God's great love. But there's good news!

Jesus died on a cross to pay the penalty for our rebellion against God. If we believe this and surrender ourselves to God through Christ, repenting of our sins, then we will become sons of the Living God (Romans 9:26)! God will forgive and forget our sins. But not all

are His sons—only those who believe in the name of Jesus of the Bible, and Jesus alone!

If you are ready to count God as your Father, then you are ready to pray that He will take hold of your life by His Spirit. Through the death and resurrection of His Son, you will know Him:

Dear Father, I recognize that I have lived my life independently of You and You consider this sin. Please forgive me through Your Son, Jesus Christ—through His death on the cross. Jesus, please come into my heart right now. I embrace You as my God and my Savior. I receive Your gift of eternal life. Show me how to live the way You want me to live. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23).

⁸ God and His creation are NOT one and the same, but nature does reflect His glory (Isaiah 6:3)!



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