

THE FATHER HEART OF GOD

A School & 120 Day Devotional Journey for Sons & Daughters

CONTENTS

Introduction

- 1. Biblical Foundation**
- 2. The Orphan Heart**
- 3. The Amazing Father**
- 4. The Elder Brother**
- 5. Father Lenses**
- 6. Heart Forgiveness**
- 7. Eternal Love**
- 8. Father-Son Relationship**
- 9. The Nature of Sonship**
- 10. Restoring the Heart of a Son or a Daughter**
- 11. Sonship Journey**

Looking Back

Application

1. INTRODUCTION

– DAY 1 –

Welcome

Welcome to this school, and devotional journey into the **Father Heart of God**. Our journey into the heart of Father God is based entirely on His desire for us to know and experience Him as our Father. If you are willing, He will reveal Himself to you with a love that will impact every part of you. His love in you will then invade the world around you. If you are willing to fully open your heart and allow Him to come to you as a Father, there are treasures in store for you with value beyond measure. I invite you to walk together with me on this journey into the **Father Heart of God**.

The word "Welcome" is written in a large, elegant cursive font. The letters are filled with a vibrant, multi-colored pattern that resembles a close-up of a flower or a textured surface, with shades of red, orange, yellow, green, and blue.

Who Should Do This School?

This school is for every child of Father God. If you have yet to begin a personal relationship with Father God through His Son Jesus Christ, then I encourage you to meet with a Christian friend and ask them to help you to come into the family of God.

You can do this school either by yourself or together with others. Ideally, you would share this journey by meeting with others in the family of God. I encourage you to meet regularly to learn, discuss and experience Father God together.

Daily Devotional

You can use this school as a 120-day devotional and so it is broken down into daily bite-sized pieces. Of course, you are entirely free to progress at a pace which suits you. Each daily devotional has an activation which will involve you writing in a journal. You will get the most out of this school if you take time to write, pray and process what you are learning.

Goals

During our time together we have three primary goals to accomplish:

1. To see that we each need a real Father – a perfect, loving Heavenly Father.
2. To experience Father God in a growing heart-to-heart relationship.
3. To be free to represent Father God as we live as sons and daughters.



Activations

Experiencing the Father Heart of God is very practical and involves our whole being. It is not simply an intellectual activity. This school includes practical activities that will help position you to encounter Father God powerfully. These activations can be done by yourself or together in a group where you can share what He is showing you and how you are encountering Him.

Prayers

Each section includes a prayer that you can use to apply the revelation you are receiving. Prayer is all about your relationship with God. So, let the prayers I have given you be a starting point for a conversation with your Father, not just something to recite out loud.

Review Questions

Questions are a powerful tool to explore our understanding and also to probe deeper into our hearts. In this school, I have included review questions after each section for two practical reasons:

1. To enable you to gauge if you have absorbed the revelation in each section.
2. As a launching place for sharing and discussion in a group setting.

I would encourage you to answer the questions in your own words by writing them out, before reading the answers I have provided. As you compare what you have written with the review question answers supplied, ask yourself the question: "Did I

miss the heart of the content of this section?" If you need to, reread the appropriate sections until you absorb the truths that I share. This process will help the truths become heart revelation to you.



Passing it On

We were never meant to keep the love of Father God to ourselves. His love is designed to be shared or given away. My prayer is that through this school you will receive a revelation of the Father Heart of God that you can pass on to others in your unique way as you share your journey with others. You can use this school as a starting point for sharing with others and blend the truths found here with your experience of Father God and with the revelation He gives you personally.

"How Do I Know it is the Father?"

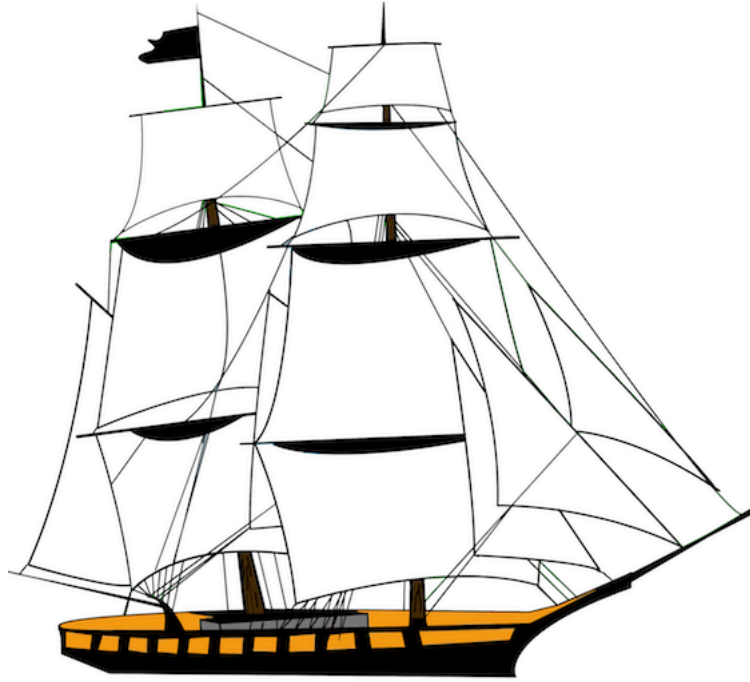
A question that I get asked again and again is: "How do you know when it is Father God speaking to you?"

Here are some simple guidelines that I hope will help you answer this question and will guide you on your journey into the heart of Father God.

- Whenever Father God relates to us, His love is always present. His love expels fear. He is a good, good Father.
- There is never any condemnation in His voice or His actions towards us.
- He always brings hope into our lives, even when He is working in our hearts and uncovering lies that we have believed about Him, ourselves and others. Anything that does not ultimately bring hope, freedom, and life into our lives is not Father God.
- We see the full expression of the heart of Father God revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Setting Off

In the first section, I would like to lay a biblical foundation for this entire school. But, before we get to that, would you let me pray for you?



Prayer

"Father God, I thank you for this precious child of yours and for their willingness to know and experience you as their Father. Father help them to walk with an open heart before you and to embrace your amazing love and goodness. May the revelation of who you are, be received by them with the heart of a child."

"Father God, I pray that any lies your children have believed that contradict who they are as your child, you will replace with life-changing truth, revelation and a growing relationship with you as their Father. I pray for them to encounter you in a real and profound way as an incredibly beloved child of God. Where there is pain from the past and a lack of true fathering, reveal yourself as a perfect Heavenly Father who can meet their deepest needs. Father help them to share honestly with you and with others so that they can discover their need to know you as Father. Help them to experience you running to them and embracing them. Father, fill them with joy and delight on this journey into your Father's heart. Amen"

1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

– DAY 2 –

The Father's House

In the Gospel of John, we see Jesus saying.

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **John 14:1-3 (NIV)***

Where was Jesus going?

To His Father's house.

Where does Jesus want us to be?

With Him in His Father's house.

A common answer to the questions I have just asked is that Jesus was going to heaven to prepare a place for us there. While this is true, it is most important for us to understand that Jesus was returning to be with His Father and is inviting us to be together with Him and with our Heavenly Father while here on earth. This realisation is much more personal and relational than simply "going to heaven" and begins when we come into the family of God (see John 1:12).



The Father's Side

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. **John 1:18 (ESV)***

Where did Jesus come from when He came to earth?

The Father's side.

The Father's side can refer to several different parts of the body – the cheek, chest, shoulder and thigh. Imagine that I am sitting in a chair and that you are standing in front of me. If I were to ask you to touch each of these parts of your body (cheek, chest, shoulder and thigh) with the corresponding part of me, how would you do it? If you put your cheek on my cheek that would be a good start, but how about the chest, shoulder, and thigh. The only way to bring all these parts together

at the same time would be for you to sit in my lap and let me embrace you in my arms like a little child.



This illustration is a beautiful picture of the meaning of the Father's side. We can also say that this is the "Father's embrace."

The Father's embrace is the kind of relationship that Jesus has always had with His Father. Jesus invites us into the same sort of intimate relationship He has with His Father. How amazing is that!

Think about how you would feel in your Heavenly Father's embrace. It is a place of:

- Closeness
- Intimacy
- Rest
- Safety
- Peace

Jesus came to earth so that we can experience His Father as our Father (John 20:17). Father God created us for a relationship with Him as beloved children. This means that we can live in the continual embrace of our wonderful Heavenly Father. Throughout this school, we will be exploring and experiencing what this means.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What have you learned about the Father's house, the Father's side and the Father's embrace? How might this understanding change the way you relate to God as your Father? Talk with Him about this and write what He says in your journal.

– DAY 3 –

Where Are We Going?

Jesus said to His disciples.

"You know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" **John 14:4-5 (NIV)**

Did the disciples know where Jesus was going?

No, they had no idea what Jesus was talking about.

Based on what we have already learned, where do you think Jesus was going?

He was returning to His Father's embrace.

Where does Jesus want us to be?

With Him in the Father's embrace.



Who is the Father Like?

*Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you believe that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing His work. **John 14:8-10 (NIV)***

Here is a crucial question. When we see Jesus, who else are we seeing?

Father God.

So, who is Jesus like?

Jesus is just like His Father.

As believers, many of us relate well to Jesus. He came to earth as a man, died for us and rose again. When we believed in Him and received Him, He became our Saviour, our Lord, and our Friend.



For many of us relating to God as our father has been more challenging. Can you remember the first time you heard about God the Father? What did you think He would be like to relate to? How have you related to Him since then?

For many years I thought of Father God more as a strict judge than as a loving father. He seemed to be far away, unapproachable and was probably very busy running the universe. Why would Father God have time for me? I know now that this

was a wrong view of Father God as my Father, but if we are honest, many of us have felt like this toward Him.

How about you? How have you seen and related with Father God as your Father?

Jesus shows us what God is really like as a Father. He is loving, forgiving, warm, approachable, generous, concerned about our needs and always has time for us. The Father's love for us is just like the love we see and experience in Jesus. Jesus reveals the Father to us.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Write down in your journal some of the qualities of Jesus that you see in the Gospels. These characteristics of Jesus reveal what the Father is like towards us. Thank Father God for what He is like towards you.

– DAY 4 –

Son

Consider these three titles used for Himself.

- Son of God
- Son of Man
- Son of David

What do these three titles have in common?

They all include “son”. Jesus is a son.



Jesus is revealed by the Father as a son so that we can become sons (and daughters) of our Heavenly Father.

Speaking about Himself, Jesus said.

... “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him.” **John 14:6-7 (NIV)**

You probably already know that Jesus is the way to the Father, but did you know that this way is only possible because Jesus is a son? We can become a son of Father God only because Jesus is the Son.

The Same Kind of Relationship

Jesus said:

*“Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. **John 5:19-20 (NIV)***

What did Jesus do when He was on earth?

Only what He saw His Father doing.

The Father showed Jesus everything He was doing, and Jesus did what He saw His Father doing. Father God wants to have this same kind of relationship with us. Jesus' example shows us what is possible in our relationship with Father God.



Why does the Father show Jesus everything that He is doing?

Because He loves Him and because He is His Son (John 5:20).

If you are a child of God, then you are also loved in this same way. You can expect Father God to relate to you in the same way, He does with His Son Jesus. He will show you all that He is doing so that you can represent Him as a son or daughter.

Perfect Theology

A well-known Bible teacher has said, "Jesus is perfect theology." Jesus is the model for all that we can be and all we can do in the Kingdom of God. I believe that this key revelation only becomes clear when we understand the relationship Jesus has with His Father.

Why did Jesus come to earth?

To die for us. Absolutely! But, also to show us how a son relates to His father and how a father relates to his son. He shows us what Kingdom family is like and then says, "Welcome to my family!"



– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What kind of relationship does Jesus have with His Father? Knowing that you can have the same kind of relationship, how will this affect you? Write in your journal.

My Testimony

At this point, I would like to share with you a little of my testimony.

I grew up believing that science held the answers to everything in the universe. I called myself an atheist, thinking that God did not exist. However, there were still questions deep in my heart that would not go away. These were questions that science could give no real answers to.

- "Why am I alive? Why me?"
- "Am I important. What is my purpose?"
- "Where did the incredible design in the natural world originate? Is there a master designer? Did he design me?"
- "Where do I go when I die?"

I found the answers to these questions (and many more) when I received Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour at the age of eighteen. I had begun my journey to know God.



Over the next years, I learned to work hard as a servant of God. Many people complimented me on my dedication and hard work. I began to perform and depend on their praises to feel good about myself.

I studied the Bible each day and later completed a degree in theology. I had a lot of knowledge about God but, if I am honest, I struggled to have an intimate relationship with Him. An inner voice told me that I was never good enough.

While I looked good on the surface, the inner reality was entirely different. I was striving to please God. I was trying my best to be a good Christian, hoping that one day God would accept me and welcome me into His presence. I couldn't rest. I didn't know how to receive love from God or others. I began to experience burnout in ministry, disappointment with other Christians and a discouragement that came close to depression at times.

Father God felt far away from me. I knew about the love of the Father but I had never experienced this love in a real way for myself. It felt like I had a massive hole in my heart and I tried many, many good Christian ways to fill this place, but nothing worked. Something had to change - I couldn't go on like this.

I will share more with you later about my journey into the heart of Father God, but for now, I want to ask you some heart questions.



Can you relate to the place I found myself?

Are you doing lots of good Christian activity, but know that there is still a hole in your heart that needs to be filled with real love?

Are you striving to be good enough to be accepted by Father God?

Can you honestly say that you live in the Father's embrace and have the same kind of relationship with Him that Jesus does?

If you can answer these questions honestly about your own life, then you are beginning to discover your real need just as I did.

Another crucial question to answer is:

Why do we find ourselves in this place and not in the Father's embrace where we should be?

In the next section we'll begin to explore some real answers to this question and see how we can start to make progress on our journey into the heart of Father God.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Write in your journal your testimony of who Father God is to you at this point in your journey with Him.

– DAY 6 –

Prayer

I encourage you to open your heart to your Heavenly Father and pray this prayer out loud to Him. Use it as a starting point to speak with Him as you rest in His loving embrace.

"Father God, I thank you for all that you have begun to reveal to me of who you are. Thank you for sending Jesus so that I can know and experience you as my Father."

"Father, please give me a revelation of what it means to live in your embrace. Embrace me in your loving arms. I rest now in this place of intimacy, acceptance, safety and peace."

"Show me any wrong way that I see you. Show me who you are and what you are like."

"I'm so glad that I can have the same kind of relationship with you as my Father that Jesus has with you. Show me what it means to be your beloved son or daughter. I believe that you are going to show me more and more of your heart and what you are doing so that I can do what you are doing."

"Lead me on in this journey into your Father's heart. Amen".

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

After you have prayed the prayer given, spend some time speaking with your Father and listening to what He says to your heart. Write in your journal.

Section Activity

Stephen Hill wrote the following in his book, “John: A Prophetic Revelation”.

John’s Gospel is the keystone of the revelation of God the Father. It was penned by a man who leant on the breast of the One who lived in the bosom of the Father. By leaning on the breast of Jesus, John heard His physical heartbeat. You could say that John was soaking: He was resting in the place where he could receive the substance of the Father’s love. John knew that a relationship with God was about receiving the down-flow of love that comes from the Father.

Jesus speaks about His Father around one hundred times as recorded in the Gospel of John. In this first activity, I want to give you an opportunity to deepen your revelation of Father God from the Scriptures. Read through the following verses and select five or six that the Holy Spirit highlights to you. Meditate on these verses and write in your journal what He shows you about Father God. You can use the following questions as a guide.

Consider these questions:

- What is the Father like?**
- As a son, how does Jesus relate to His Father?**
- Considering that you can have this same kind of relationship, what does this mean for you?**

Passages

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. **John 1:18 (NIV)**

The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. **John 3:35 (NIV)**

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; He can do only what he sees His Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. **John 5:19 (NIV)**

For the Father loves the Son and shows him all He does. Yes, and he will show Him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. **John 5:20 (NIV)**

For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. **John 5:26 (NIV)**

"Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." **John 6:27 (NIV)**

Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **John 6:32 (NIV)**

All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. **John 6:37 (NIV)**

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. **John 6:44 (NIV)**

It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to me. **John 6:45 (NIV)**

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. **John 6:57 (NIV)**

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I have come here from God. I have not come on my own; God sent me. **John 8:42 (NIV)**

*"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. **John 10:14-15 (NIV)***

*I and the Father are one." **John 10:30 (NIV)***

*Do not believe me unless I do the works of my Father. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." **John 10:37-38 (NIV)***

*For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say." **John 12:49-50 (NIV)***

*Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and was returning to God; **John 13:3 (NIV)***

*Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. **John 14:23 (NIV)***

*"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **John 15:1 (NIV)***

*"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **John 15:9 (NIV)***

*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit-fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **John 15:15-16 (NIV)***

*All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what He will make known to you." **John 16:15 (NIV)***

*In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. **John 16:26-27 (NIV)***

"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me.

John 16:32 (NIV)

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" **John 20:17 (NIV)**

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **John 20:21 (NIV)**

Review Questions

I would encourage you to write down your answers to the following questions. Remember, the purpose of answering these questions is not to get the answer exactly correct, but to check your understanding. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you.

You can also use these questions for group discussion. You could discuss whether you agree or disagree with what I taught and why. As you are sharing together, ask yourself, "How does this apply to me personally and what new revelation have I received." Share this with your group.

1. Where was Jesus going when He left earth?
2. What is another term that you can use to describe the Father's side?
3. Where does Father God want us to live?
4. What kind of relationship does Father God desire to have with us?
5. Who is Father God like?
6. How do we know that Father God loves us?
7. What is the way to the Father that Jesus describes?
8. Why does the Father show Jesus everything He is doing?
9. Why does the Father desire to show us everything He is doing?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. Jesus was returning to His Father's house or His Father's embrace.
2. The Father's embrace.
3. In His embrace as our loving Father.
4. The same kind of relationship that He has with His son Jesus.
5. He is like Jesus. Jesus shows us the Father.
6. The way we see Jesus loving us is the same way the Father loves us.
7. By becoming a son (or daughter) just as Jesus is.
8. Because as a father, He loves His Son. The Son can then do what the Father is doing.
9. He loves us as His children as we can do what He is doing.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Honestly evaluate how you answered the review questions. Where do you need more understanding? Go back to the content of this section and write some notes in your journal.

2. THE ORPHAN HEART

– DAY 9 –

“I will not leave you as orphans...”

In the **Bible** from Genesis to Revelation, we read about a **Father** who:

- **Longed** to have children, then
- **Lost** those children, and
- **Would** do everything He could to **win** them back.



On one particular day in history (around the year AD30) Jesus was sharing with His disciples. He said something to them that was quite puzzling, but very important. In fact, this may be one of the most important verses in the whole Bible.



Jesus said

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." **John 14:18 (NIV)**

You may have read this verse many times, but do you understand what Jesus was saying to His disciples and also to you? In this section, we will explore together what Jesus was saying.

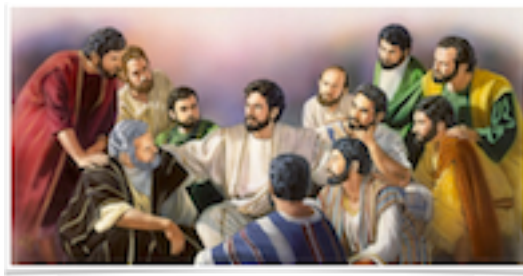
Orphans

What makes someone an orphan?

They do not have a father or mother.



Were Jesus' disciples orphans? Is this why Jesus said that He would not leave them as orphans? Let's look at the Scriptures. When Jesus first met James and John, they were preparing nets with their father (Matthew 4:21-22). Their mother approached Jesus and asked if her two sons might sit at His left and right hand in the coming Kingdom (Matthew 20:20). James and John had parents who were alive and well. They were not orphans. As far as we know none of the other disciples were orphans.



If the disciples were not orphans in a natural sense, why did Jesus say He would not leave them as orphans?

We need to look deeper for answers to this question.

From the last section you will remember that when we have seen Jesus, we have also seen the Father. When Jesus said to His disciples, "I will not leave you as orphans," this is what Father God was saying to them and also to us. I believe that Father God was saying, "You are like orphans in this world. But, I will not leave you like this. I will come to you as a Father."

Being "like an orphan" is a heart condition that we can also describe as having an orphan heart or orphan-heartedness.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Spend some time memorising John 14:18. Imagine yourself being one of the disciples who heard Jesus say this to them. Write in your journal how this makes you feel.

Orphaned Spirit

Where did the orphan heart first appear? To find the answer, we need to go back before time began.

How you have fallen from heaven, morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! How you have fallen from heaven "morning star." You said in your heart, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of Mount Zaphon. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." **Isaiah 14:12-14 (NIV)**

Who is the passage talking about?

Lucifer

Lucifer was a special angel in charge of worship in heaven. However, at some point pride developed in Lucifer's heart and he decided to try and take God's position for himself. The result was that Lucifer was forced to leave heaven and was cast down to the earth. He became the fallen angel we know as Satan.



I Will

What two words are repeated five times in the verses we just read about Lucifer?

I will!

"I will" means, "I'm going to be in charge. I'll do it my way! I don't care what you think; it's all about me!" Up until this point, heaven had never seen this kind of attitude.

Rejecting Father

Where did Lucifer fall from?

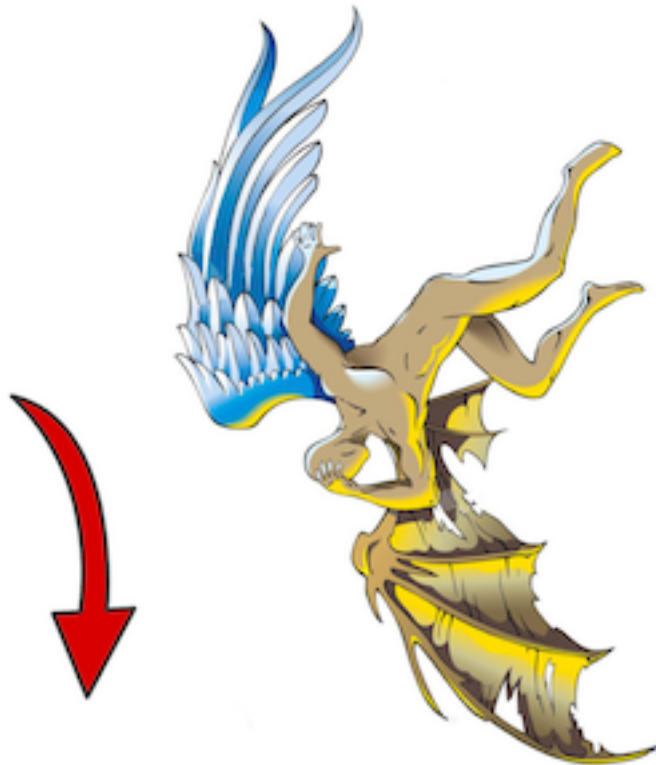
Heaven. God's presence

Heaven is a place filled with God's presence and love. Heaven is a place where the heart of Father God is perfectly revealed all the time and in every way. Lucifer chose to rebel against God and by doing so, rejected Father God's love. Lucifer refused the fathering heart of God. Even though as an angel Lucifer would never have been a son like Jesus, he still chose to turn his back on Father God.



Lucifer became an "orphaned spirit". This was the beginning of the orphan heart. Consider this picture of what was happening.

GOD *the Father*



satan *first orphan spirit*

In his pride and strength, Lucifer tried to ascend to God's place. The result was that he fell from heaven and became an orphaned spirit separated from the love of God. Lucifer's example gives us some insights into how an orphan heart operates apart from the love and fathering nature of Father God.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What does Lucifer's example speak to you? How do you think what happened to Lucifer can relate to us now? Write in your journal.

– DAY 11 –

Intimate Creation

How did God create during the first five days of creation?

He spoke or commanded. "He said, let there be ..."



On the sixth day of Creation, God changed the creative process. The way in which God created man was entirely different to the way He had formed the rest of creation.

"... the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." **Genesis 2:7 (NIV)**

Now we see that God is creating in a much more personal and "up-close" way. He was intimately involved in forming the man and breathing His own life into him. To breathe life into his nostrils, God would have come very near to the man's face.



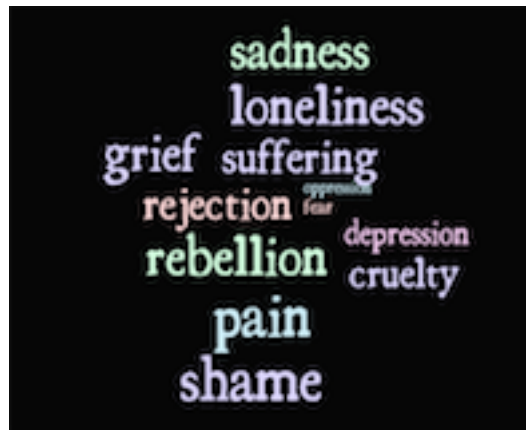
What was the first thing that the man would have seen when he opened his eyes?

The eyes of His loving Father gazing into his.

In this first moment of his life, the man experienced the love and acceptance of his Father. James Jordan describes this moment as a waterfall of love from Father God pouring into the heart of His son. The man, whom God called Adam, was born in love into a perfect love relationship with His Father.

No Orphan Heart

In the garden, Adam and the woman (who would later be called Eve) experienced a perfect love relationship with their Creator Father. They didn't do anything to earn this love; it was a gift to them as a son and a daughter. There was no fear, pain, selfishness, rejection, loneliness or mistrust in their relationship with God. These things did not yet exist. As a beloved son and daughter, the orphan heart was not a part of them.



Revenge

Let's go back to Lucifer (who is now called Satan). The orphan heart in Satan expresses itself through hate and revenge. Satan knew that he would never be able to take revenge by directly attacking God Himself. However, there was one way that he could try to exact revenge against God.

Who were the first beings created in the image of God?

Adam and Eve

Satan would attempt to get revenge by attacking the ones created in God's image and most precious to Him. Satan began to devise a plan to make Adam and Eve into spiritual orphans just as he is.



– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Close your eyes and imagine yourself in Adam's place. What would it have been like to be born into a perfect love relationship with Father God? Imagine that this was you? Write in your journal.

A Trap

In Genesis chapter three we read that Satan came into the garden and set a trap for Adam and the woman. Together they believed the lie that Father God was not giving His best to them. They chose to do things their way to become like God just as Lucifer had done. Shortly after this, realising they were naked, they tried to cover themselves and hide from their Father. Shame and fear brought about a break in the intimate relationship they had with their loving Father.



Through their choice to disobey they were saying, "I will do life my way. I don't need to be fathered by God." It was at this point that the orphan heart first formed within a human being. A son and a daughter had become like orphans in this world. Disobedience, independence, pride, fear, and shame are some of the fruit of an orphan heart. The inner belief that God is not always a completely good Father is at the root of all orphan-heartedness.

Broken Relationship

Adam and Eve had never experienced any pain up until this point. Now they are experiencing the pain of a broken relationship. They are separated from the One who had always loved them. Broken relationships are always painful. Can you remember the first time someone broke your heart? We are created to be relational, so broken relationships touch the deepest part of our being.



Have you ever stopped to consider how Father God was feeling? What was happening in His heart?

There was undoubtedly grief and sadness in the Father's heart. He had always poured His fathering love into His children, but now they had rejected Him and His love.

Punishment?

The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and also take from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he

*placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life. **Genesis 3:21-24 (NIV)***

Before sin and the orphan heart entered the world, Adam and Eve had complete access to the Tree of Life. If sin had not broken their relationship with Father God, they would have lived forever in His presence with a perfect intimate relationship with Him. However, we know from what we have just read that God banished His children from the garden and fellowship with His presence.



Why did God banish them from the garden? Was this punishment?

No, this was not punishment, but the act of a loving Father.

Have you ever considered what it would have been like to live forever, but still to suffer from the devastating effects of sin and an ever-growing orphan heart? Adam and Eve and all their descendants would have been separated for all eternity from the Father with no hope of a restored relationship. This horrible outcome is what would have happened if Adam and Eve had remained in the garden with an orphan heart.

They were not allowed to stay because of their Father's great love for them. Love always believes the best for the future, even when the current circumstances look dark. Father God continually wants to reveal His Father heart and will wait until we are ready to receive Him.

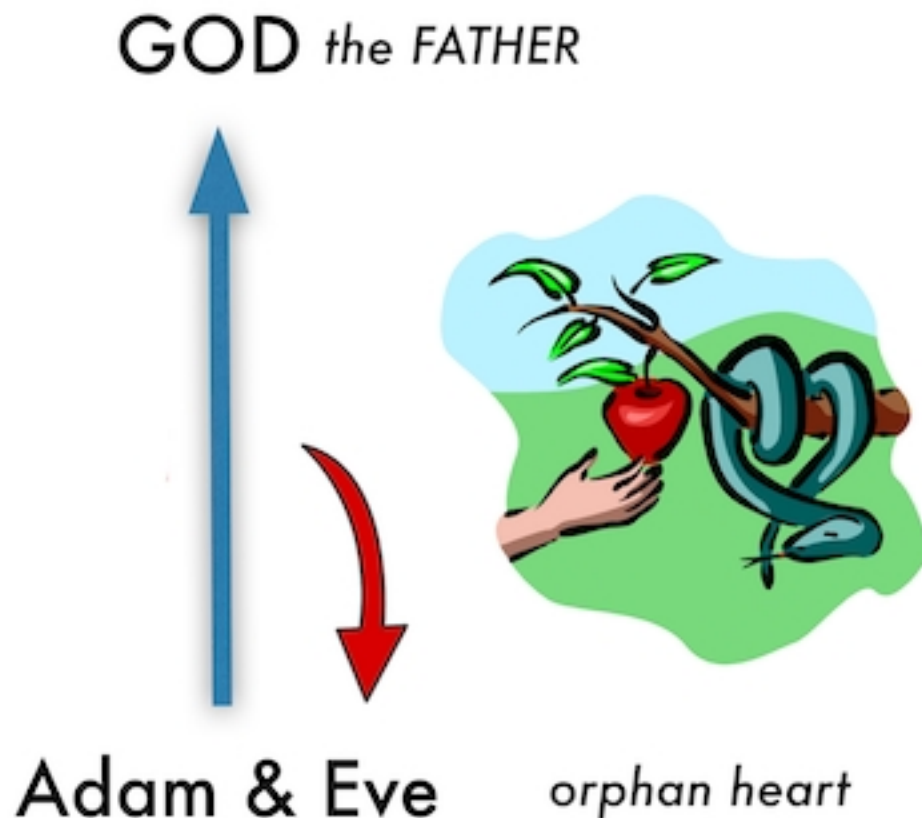


– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever experienced a broken relationship or rejection? How did this make you feel? How do you think Father God feels about His children when they are separated from Him? Write in your journal.

An Orphan World

Adam and Eve had tried in their own strength to become like God. This self-effort had failed. They were now no longer able to live as sons and daughters in the Father's loving presence. They find themselves living like orphans.



Adam and Eve now have the heart of an orphan instead of the heart of a beloved son and daughter. History shows us that orphan-hearted people can do all kinds of cruel things to one another to protect themselves and meet their needs. Their focus

is now inward and they are thinking they must supply their own needs rather than looking outward to a loving Father to supply all their needs.

A world full of people living as orphans towards Father God is a world full of suffering, pain, war, famine, fear, oppression, broken relationships, abuse, murder, and injustice. These are all fruit of the orphan heart.



Every descendant of Adam and Eve has been born into an orphan world. We have all been born into this orphan world and grow up with many opportunities to develop an orphan heart

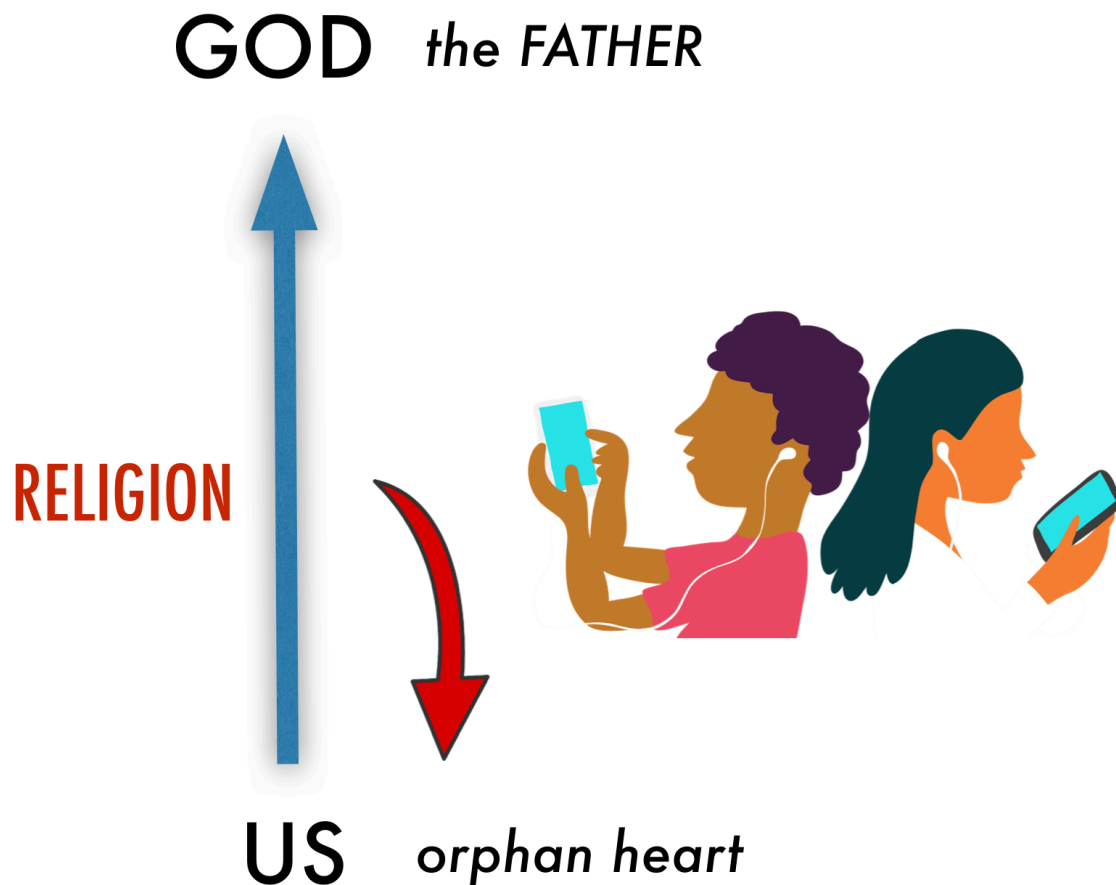
Religion

Religion can be defined as any way that people try to find their own way to God. We have already seen this illustrated in the examples of Lucifer and Adam and Eve. As we have grown up in this orphan world, we now find ourselves in the same place as them.



Religion is the activity of spiritual orphans who are living without Father God.
Religion looks like:

- Developing our own righteousness.
- Obeying laws, codes and rules.
- Working hard to earn acceptance (a performance mindset).
- Opposing those who don't think like us.
- Changing outward behaviour while the heart is unchanged.
- All kinds orphan thinking and living (behaviour and conduct).



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Can you relate to living like an orphan and practising orphan-like religion? How does this relate to you and your past? Write in your journal.

A New Nature

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)**

In Christ, we have become a new creation. As believers, we now have an entirely new nature. Everything in us now has the potential to be Christlike and to grow into the fullness of sons and daughters of God. This new nature does not include any aspect of an orphan heart. We can truthfully say that we are no longer like orphans. We do not have an orphan heart; we have the heart of a beloved son or daughter of our heavenly Father.

New and Old Clothes

So, why do we sometimes see what looks like the fruit of an orphan heart in our lives?

In Christ, we are completely forgiven and made clean. Along with a new nature, we receive the resurrection power of God to live in this new nature. We now have the ability to live entirely out of our new nature as sons and daughters, but we need to develop this way of living and being. Living from our new nature is not an automatic, one-off transaction, but an experiential process of growth in relationship with God.

We all still have some old ways of thinking and relating that we have learned in growing up in this orphan world. Here is an analogy that should help you to

understand this process: If our new nature is an entirely new set of clothes, then we can say there are still some garments from our old nature lying around that we need to throw away. These old garments are not a part of who we are now. We can still choose to pick them up again; or, with Father God's help, we can remove them from our lives completely and live wholly from our new nature.



An example might be helpful at this point: If we have experienced rejection as a child, then even as an adult Christian when a brother or sister rejects us, the feelings of rejection can be very real. We can still react in an orphan-like way to this rejection. The reality is that we need healing in our heart from past hurts and wounds. We need to experience the real love of Father God in this area of our lives. There is also a process of replacing lies with truth. In summary, we need to learn to live as sons and daughters as we walk hand-in-hand with Father God.

Our Real Need

The reason that we have been looking at the orphan heart is to help us to understand our real need to know and experience Father God as a real Father. Our Father loves us but allows us to choose to receive His love and fathering into every part of our lives. If we do not live as beloved sons and daughters, we may find ourselves picking up the old garments of orphan living.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Are there any areas in your life where you are still picking up the old garments of orphan living? How will life be different for you now as a new creation? Write in your journal.

Important Questions

Here are some important questions we need to ask ourselves:

What is the difference between an orphan and a son or daughter?

Am I living like an orphan or a beloved son or daughter of the my Heavenly Father?

In the areas of my life where there is still a tendency towards orphan-like thinking and behaviour, what can I do?

A Contrast

To help answer the preceding questions, it can be helpful to look at how orphans live compared with sons and daughters. What do orphans feel inside? How do they go about getting their needs met? This kind of comparison can help us to see the areas in our lives where we are still picking up the old garments of orphan living and how we could be living as sons and daughters of our Father.



This contrast will require some real honesty with ourselves and may even be a little painful as we consider how we have been thinking and living. Remember, in Christ there is never any condemnation. Father God always has the best in store for us, even when a heart adjustment is occurring. When we begin to see our real need we are in the best position to receive all that Father God has for us. As we make this contrast between orphans and sons and daughters, I encourage you to write down any areas that specifically apply to your life. Later, there will be an opportunity to pray through these areas and to receive the Father's love into these areas of our lives so that we can experience the reality of a transformation into a son or daughter of the Father.

No Personal Experience of a Father

Orphans know about fathers, but have no personal experience of a father. Imagine two ten-year-old boys who both attend the same school. One boy is an orphan, and the other has a father and mother. One day, at the end of class, the two boys are walking out through the entrance of the school. The boy with a father sees his dad waiting for him and walks up to him. His father puts an arm around his son and asks him, "How has your day been son?" Meanwhile, his friend is watching this happen. The orphan boy knows that fathers are real and even what a father is like, yet he is fully aware that he does not have his own experience of a father.



We can know about something, but yet not experience the reality of it. We can think we know all about God as a father without directly experiencing His love and embrace for ourselves. Knowledge about someone is not the same as having a relationship with them.

Sons and daughters live in the reality of a daily experience of the love of their Heavenly Father. In this place of relationship, Father God can meet every need we have, and every part of our being becomes alive. We don't need to watch from afar the experience others have with the Father. He invites us to live in His embrace for ourselves.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Have you experienced being in the place of knowing about Father God, but not having an intimate relationship with Him? Are you in this situation now? What are you going to do? Write in your journal.

Slave Mentality

Orphans think and live like a slave or a servant where everything must be earned. They work hard but are never fully accepted as a part of the family. If we see God primarily as a master to be pleased, then we may struggle to experience His love and acceptance as a Father that He desires to give us as a gift.



Sons and daughters are fully accepted in the family. This place of belonging does not need to be earned but is based entirely on love. The relationship that Jesus has with His Father gives us an incredible insight into what this means. When Jesus was baptised in the Jordan River His Father said to Him:

"You are my Son, whom I love; with you, I am well pleased." **Mark 1:11 (NIV)**

Had Jesus done any miracles before His Father spoke these words to Him?

No. Jesus hadn't started His ministry yet.

Firstly, Jesus was a son of his Father. The love and acceptance of His Father were based on who He was: as a son; not on what He did. Jesus already knew the full pleasure of His Father-Son relationship before He did anything. Jesus was a son and then a servant.

In Christ, we have this same kind of love relationship with Father God. He fully accepts in His Son us as his sons & daughters before we can do anything for Him. When we know who we are as sons and daughters, we can then serve God from this place of our true identity needing to earn acceptance.

Not Belonging

Orphans never really belong. They may have a place to live, but they never have a home that is theirs. An orphan will always feel as though they are on the outside looking into a family rather than on the inside being a part of one.



While Jesus was on earth during His public ministry He never really had a physical place to call home. His home was in His Father's heart of love for Him. This is where Jesus belonged.

As sons and daughters of the Father, we also belong in Him. The Father's love is our real home. Just like Jesus, we as beloved sons and daughters can be at home wherever we are.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever felt as if you don't belong? Describe your experience? How would this be different for you now as a son or daughter? Write about this in your journal.

The World is Against Me!

Orphans often feel that they are on their own and that everyone else is against them. In their heart, they say, "Everyone wants to take something from me, I need to protect myself!" Orphans struggle to open up their heart to others because of fear of what others will do to them or think of them.



Sons and daughters know that their Father is for them and that He only gives His absolute best to them all the time. In this place of love and acceptance, we can open our hearts fully to Him and trust Him completely. As confident and secure sons and daughters, we can then reveal our hearts to others and form intimate, loving relationships without fear.

Following Rules

Orphans live life according to rules. They learn the rules of life to benefit themselves. They know that if they break the rules and get caught, they will get punished. There is often a fear of punishment.



Sons and daughters have the freedom to be who God has created them to be. As sons and daughters, we have a relationship with our Father. We know Him and learn to live according to His love within us, not a list of rules. When love is more important than rules, we will look more and more like our Father.

There is no fear of punishment in love (1 John 4:18). Love removes all fear from our hearts and brings us to a place of safety and security in our relationship with our Heavenly Father.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Describe an experience you have had where the rules were more important than love. How could this situation have been handled differently? What would you do now? Write in your journal.

No Family Identity

Orphans have no identity as part of a family. They will tend to try to build their own identity through gaining positions, power and status. Orphans strive to be recognised by others and will often seek to control others.

Jesus said, *“Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever”* **John 8:35 (NIV)**

Sons and daughters discover their true identity in family relationship with their Father. Jesus modelled this for us in His relationship with His Father. He did not need people to give Him titles, status, and recognition. Jesus' relationship with His Father was the secure place of identity from which He lived powerfully. As sons and daughters, our family identity also comes from our Heavenly Father.



Fighting for Position & Power

Orphans will often compete with others to obtain what they need in life. They are afraid that if they don't aggressively take what they need, then they will miss out. It then becomes necessary to fight for positions of power and influence.



Sons and daughters receive an abundant inheritance from their Father. They know that Father God has more than enough for all his children. When we see how good our Father is and discover how freely He wants to give us everything we need, we are not afraid to bless others and see them receive all that the Father has for them.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Have you ever found yourself trying to build your own identity or going after positions or power? How will things change for you now as a son or daughter of the Father? Write in your journal.

Seeking Comfort From Pain

Orphans will often seek comfort to ease the pain they feel inside. Comfort takes the form of things such as drugs, sex outside marriage, pornography, drinking, smoking, materialism, and over-eating. These ways of seeking comfort are a substitute for love and acceptance.



Sons and daughters receive comfort from a loving Father. The Father's comfort is not temporary but provides a place of rest, security and peace. The comfort the Father gives us is a place where we can be understood, healed and restored.

Orphans Reproduce Orphans

Orphans will reproduce others who live as they do. They can only give to others what they have – an orphan way of life. Orphans who become leaders will raise up others to be like them as orphan-hearted leaders.

Sons and daughters become fathers and mothers who can reproduce other sons and daughters. With a heart filled with the Father's love, we can represent our Heavenly Father well and model this to others who will also become sons and daughters, and then fathers and mothers to many.



We have now completed our contrast of orphans with sons and daughters. I hope that you have been able to see that orphan ways of living are far below where the Father desires us to live as His beloved children. To live as a son or daughter of the Father is always a better way.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What things do you do to receive comfort? Ask Father God to be your comfort. Talk to Him about it. Write down what He says in your journal.

Hope

Father God said to the disciples and to everyone who would ever be born into this world.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" **John 14:18 (NIV)**

At that very moment, true hope came into the world for all the orphan-hearted. The hope of having a real relationship with Father God as sons and daughters. The hope that we can live freely in the Father's embrace with no trace of orphan-living in our lives.



Father God also promised, "I will come to you." This promise is crucially important. Father God is not distant from His children. As a Father, He desires to be close to us. He will come to us and be the Father that we need.

Our Choice

Even as Christians, there is a choice that we all still have to make.

We can choose to keep trying to make a way to God in our strength. We can find ourselves jumping through all the right religious hoops and striving to please God by being righteous through our self-effort. All religious effort is the orphan approach to being like God. Lucifer and Adam and Eve tried this method and failed. Throughout history, many others have attempted to "climb up to God" and have failed. Religious effort will never result in the heart relationship Father God desires to have with us as His sons and daughters.

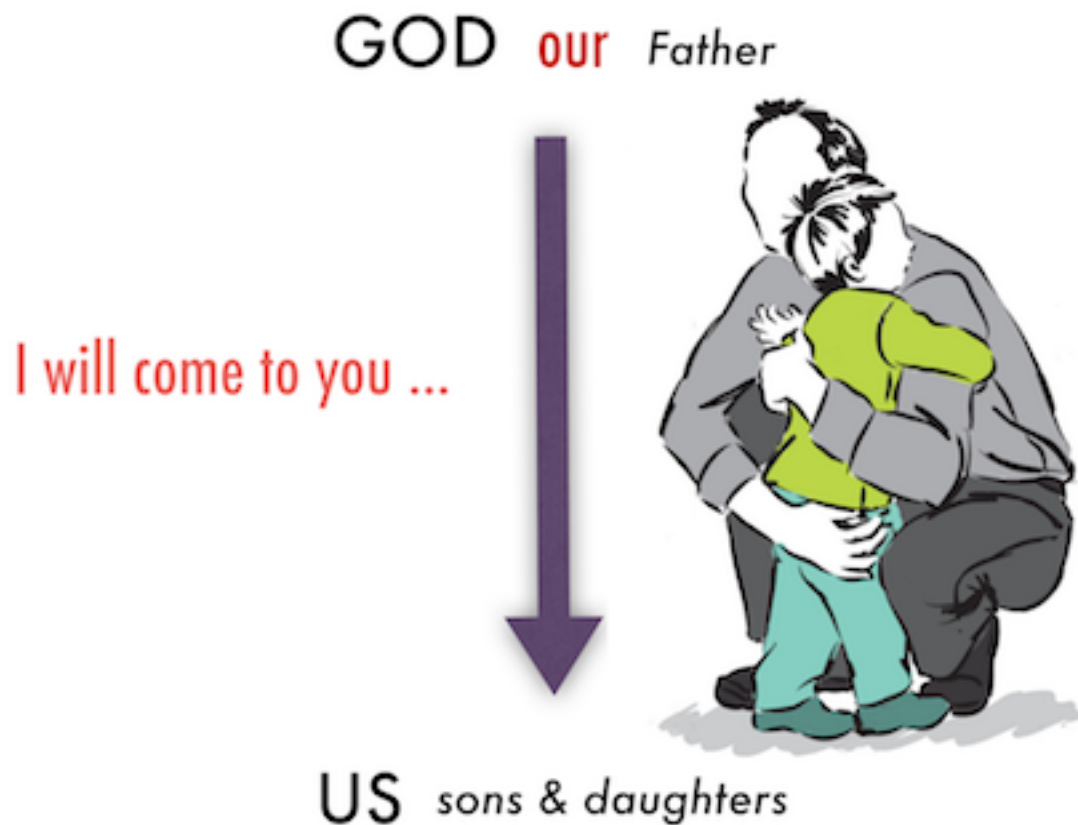
GOD *the FATHER*



US



Or, we can let Father God come to us as He promised He would. We can allow Him to be our Father.



Father God will come to us, and we will experience embrace. In this place, we will experience the love of a perfect Heavenly Father and discover how to live as sons and daughters. In this place, we will discover how much we need our Heavenly Father and how willing He is to keep coming to us and to be with us.

We will be able to say:

FATHER GOD IS MY FATHER

What will you choose today and for the rest of your life?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Are you willing to allow Father God to be a Father to you? What will this look like in your life? Spend some time listening to Him and write what you hear in your journal.

Prayer

I encourage you to pray this prayer from your heart. Use it as a basis to talk with your Father.

"Father God, thank you for being my Father. Please forgive me for the times I have still thought and acted like an orphan. Forgive me for trying to find you in my own strength."

"Please forgive me for being satisfied with only knowing about you, but not having a real experience with you as my Father. Forgive me for trying to earn your love and approval. Forgive me for staying away from your loving embrace and believing the lie that I don't belong."

"At times I have acted like an orphan towards others. I have been afraid that if you bless others, I will miss out. Forgive me for competing with others and seeking to control them for my own gain. Forgive me for trying to create my own identity through titles, positions and the recognition of others. Please forgive me for finding comfort in things that bring only temporary relief and at times have been harmful in my life."

"Father God, please help me to remove all the old orphan clothes that still affect my thinking and living. You promised that you would not leave me like an orphan. So I declare that I am not an orphan. I am your beloved son/daughter."

"Today, I turn away from all religion and striving in order to reach you. I give up all my efforts to be like you. I give up all my efforts to earn your love and acceptance."

"Father, please come to me as you promised you would. Embrace me in your loving arms and be my Father. I receive your fathering love into every area of my life."

Thank you that you know my heart completely and yet still love me unconditionally. Please release the transforming power of your love into my heart."

"I receive your love where I have felt like a slave striving to please you as a master. I have already pleased you simply by becoming your child. I bring great pleasure to you, and you completely accept me. I receive your love into every area where I have felt that I was not good enough for you. I am free from the fear of punishment."

"I receive your love where I have felt that I don't belong. I am not looking in from the outside. I belong in your family. I belong in your heart."

"I receive your love that gives me true identity and brings total security and peace to my heart. I receive my true identity that removes every need to compete with others and to strive to make a name for myself. Even when the world seems to be against me. I am completely loved by you as my Father."

"I receive your love that enables me to receive you as a good, giving Father. I am now free to receive my true inheritance from you and to bless others from the overflow. I receive your love that enables me to open my heart to you and to trust you fully."

"I receive your love that gives comfort into the deepest places in my heart and brings me to a place of rest. I receive your love that casts out every fear from my life. I receive your love that brings true freedom to be your son or daughter."

"Father God, help me to represent you well as a son or daughter. Let my life reproduce other sons and daughters. I want to be a father/mother to others who need to know you as their Father."

"Father God, thank you that you are coming to me now and that you will always come to me. Thank you for being my Father. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Pray the above prayer again. This time stop after each paragraph and talk with Father God from your heart. Write in your journal what He says to you.

Section Activity

Find a quiet place to sit or lie down. Put on some worshipful instrumental music if you can. Close your eyes and focus the attention of your heart on your loving Heavenly Father.

I want you to think about some of the old orphan clothes that might still be lying around in your life. These are orphan ways of thinking and living that we may pick up and wear again from time to time. Ask the Father to show you these things. For me, one of the orphan ways of living that I have struggled with is performing for God and for others to earn love and acceptance. I'm asking you to be honest with your heart struggles.

Now, I want you to imagine these orphan ways as the old clothes that they are. They are not a part of your new nature in Christ or your true identity as a son or daughter of the Father. As a child of God, you are not designed to wear them, ever.

Imagine the following scenario. You make a pile of the old orphan clothes outside on some open ground. You then pour petrol on them and light a match. You then watch those old orphan garments burn for a little while. Now thank your Father that they are gone and that you do not have to pick them up again.

Next, invite Father God to come to you. Allow Him to embrace you in His arms. Rest in His loving arms like a little child. Ask your Father to reveal Himself to you in a very personal way. Ask Him how He sees you as His son or daughter. What is He giving you to replace the orphan clothes that you used to wear before you became His child?

Spend some time just being with Him.

When you have finished, write down in your journal the things that the Father showed you.

Review Questions

1. What did Jesus say in John 14:18?
2. Who was the first orphan? How did this happen?
3. What was Adam's first experience in life?
4. Why did God banish Adam and the woman from the garden?
5. How would you define religion?
6. Describe two aspects of the life of an orphan and how a son or daughter is very different.
7. What does the Father promise He will do for us?
8. What is the choice we need to make?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. "I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you."
2. Lucifer. He rejected the Fathering of God and tried to make his way to be like God.
3. He saw the face of his loving Father and experienced perfect love. He was born into a perfect loving relationship as a son.
4. If they had been allowed to stay in the garden and to eat from the tree of life, they would have lived forever and experienced the ever-growing effect of sin

and an orphan heart. There would have been no hope of a restored relationship with their Father.

5. Any way that people try to find their way to God like orphans.
6. Various answers. See the comparison between orphans and sons and daughters.
7. He will come to us. We don't need to strive to get to Him by our efforts.
8. We can try to find our way to Father God by religious effort, or we can let the Father come to us as He promised He would.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How did you go with these questions? Did you capture the heart of this section that we don't need to live like an orphan in any way? We are authentic sons and daughters, and Father God loves to come to us.

3. THE AMAZING FATHER

– DAY 24 –

God is Love

The writers of the Bible used many different words to describe what God is like. The apostle John most often used one simple word to describe God throughout his writings.

*And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. **God is love.** Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. **1 John 4:16 (NIV)***

God is love. Does He love? Yes, He loves because He is love. This is the very essence of His nature. God will always love because He is love.

What is Father God Like?

In the Gospel of Luke chapter 15 we read about Jesus telling three stories with a similar theme.

Do you know these stories?

The lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son.

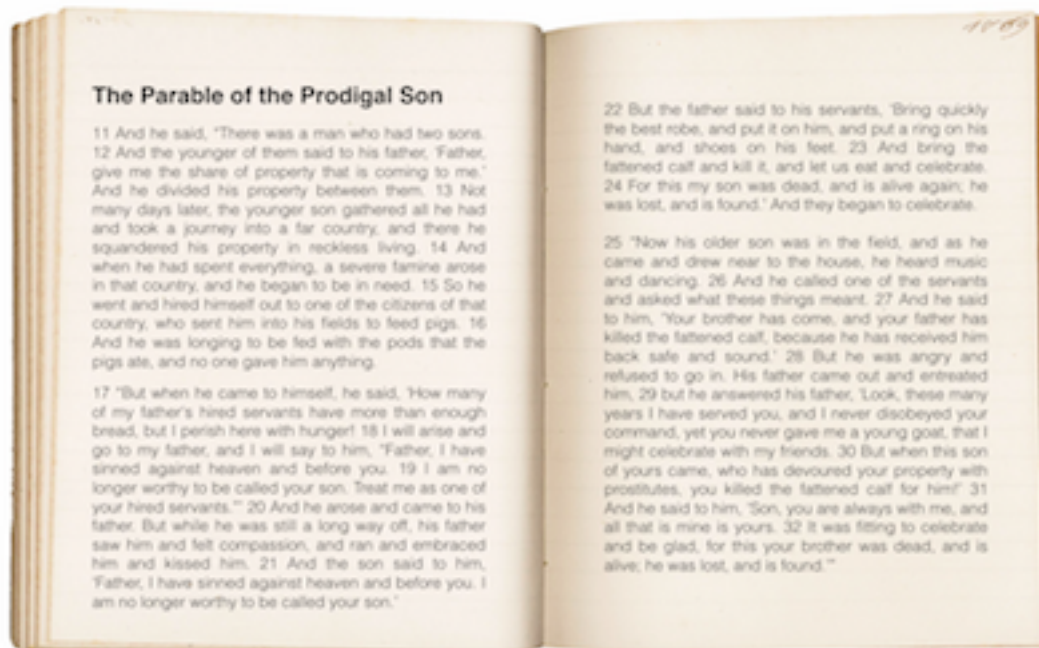
Jesus told these stories for one simple reason. He wanted to introduce His Father to us and to reveal to us His true nature. God is a Father who is always seeking those who are lost so that they can be brought home.

Today we are going to have a closer look at the story about the lost son that we call “the Prodigal Son”.



The Prodigal Son

Why do we call this story “The Prodigal Son”? Have a look in your Bible just after Luke 15:10. Many of our translations have the heading, “The Prodigal Son”. This heading is not an original part of the Scriptures. It was inserted there by the Bible translators to help the readers understand the content of the passage that followed. These headings reveal the way the translator understood what was being said. They are not God’s Word and do not necessarily represent His heart.



Using the word "prodigal" implies that the lost son was an unworthy scoundrel and that he was the primary focus of the story Jesus was telling. Many of us have been taught that the main point of this story is the sin and failure of this younger son.

However, this is not true. The central character of this whole story is a father and his amazing love. We are introduced to a father who loves and forgives his son even when he was not loved in return.

So, I'm changing the title of this story to: "The Amazing Father!" You are free to call the story whatever you like, but I believe that this amazing father and His incredible love deserve to be the central focus of the story. This, I believe, was Jesus' intention in revealing Father to us in this story.

Now, we are going to read the story in several parts. As we read, I encourage you to listen with an open heart to what this story is saying to you personally.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

How did you view this story of the prodigal son in the past? Has your view changed now? What does this mean for you? Write about this in your journal.

Inheritance

*“There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. **Luke 15:11-12 (NIV)***

Who are the three main characters in this story?

The father and his two sons.

The younger son asks his Father for his share of the estate. He was asking for his inheritance.

When do we usually receive an inheritance from our parents?

When they die.

This younger son should not have received his inheritance until after his father’s death. By asking for his inheritance while his father was still alive, this son was essentially saying, “Father, I wish you were dead. I don’t care about you. I just want your stuff!”



A Different Father

In this culture, there was no law requiring the father to give his son an early inheritance. In fact, by asking for his inheritance early, the son was rebelling against his father. At that time, the law stated clearly, that rebellion against parents would have severe consequences. The son should have been reported to the elders, tried and then dragged into a clearing outside the village where a pile of rocks was waiting. The father would be given the first stone and would cast this upon his son. After this, everyone else in that village would then hurl a rock until the young man was dead. This was the prescribed punishment for rebelling against your parents.



But, this father was different. Even before his son rebelled against him, he had already forgiven him. Love was more important than the rules. This father was already thinking of the day that his son would return to him and receive his love. True love always hopes for and expects the best, even when the one we love turns against us.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

How is God a different Father? How is He a different Father to you than the one you have known until now? Write this in your journal.

Home

When you hear the word “home” what do you see? You may see the physical place you live in now or the place you grew up. However, we know that there is much more to “home” than just a physical place. Jesus did not have a permanent place to call home during the three years of His public ministry. He didn’t have a physical home. Jesus' real home was in His intimate relationship with His Father. He carried His home with Him.

Home represents the centre of our being. Home is the place where we are fully loved and can have our deepest needs met.



It can be helpful to look at seven things that a child needs in a home

Home is a place to receive:

- Security
- Affirmation

- Protection
- Comfort
- Peace
- Identity
- Destiny

Even as adults, to be at home, we need to be receiving all these things. Let's have a look at some of these aspects of home more closely by putting them in a real-life context.

Security & Protection

Wangming is constantly bullied at school by the older boys. One day he is walking home from school and hears the bullies taunting him from a distance. Terrified, Wangming starts to run as fast as he can with the bullies in hot pursuit. He reaches his house and throws open the gate. He hears the yells of the bullies right behind him. "Catch him. Don't let him get away!", they shout. In desperation, Wangming uses his last bit of energy to dash across his yard and hurls himself up the stairs of his house. He can feel someone grasping his leg. "They've got me," he thinks in despair. He turns around to face the bullies. Suddenly the grip on his leg loosens, and he sees that the bullies are all turning and running away as fast as they can. Wangming turns back to the doorway to see his father standing there with his arms on his hips. He fills the whole doorway. "Now, I'm safe," Wangming thinks in relief.

Real security and protection are only found in the presence of Father God. He is our protector and our safe place. We are at home when we are with our Father.

Comfort

Jennifer liked a boy at school. The boy also liked her, and they went on several dates together. One day the boy came to Jennifer and said, "I don't like you anymore. I want to date someone else." Jennifer is devastated and shuts herself in her bedroom crying. Later, after her dad comes home from work, he comes into Jennifer's room to see her. She jumps into her dad's arms and pours out her heart and all the pain she is feeling. Jennifer's dad hugs her and reassures her that everything will be all right.

Home is the place to receive comfort when we are hurt and in pain. Father God always offers true comfort to children. His embrace is the only place we can be fully comforted, loved and restored.

Affirmation

One day Peter's father asked him to help carry a box of bottles into the basement. As Peter is going down the steep stairs, he trips and drops the box with a tremendous crash. All the bottles smashed on the basement floor and while walking away from there Peter cut his feet on the broken glass. Peter's father came running and shouted at him saying, "You stupid boy! I give you one simple job to do, and you can't even do that properly. Clean up this mess!" Peter hangs his head in shame and starts to pick up the broken glass.

Now imagine the same story, but a different father runs down to the basement when he hears the bottles smash. He runs through the broken glass on the floor and picks his son up. The father then says to his son, "Never mind about the bottles. You are much more valuable than those things. Let's get your feet fixed up and then we can clean up this mess later."

Words have tremendous power to either tear us down or build us up inside. When we affirm someone we are saying, "I love you, and I believe in you – even when you make a mistake or fail." When Father God speaks to us, he is always affirming us. We all need to be continually affirmed by Father God in this way. Father God loves us as His children unconditionally. He always wants us to be at home with Him.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What is home to you? What has been your experience of "home"? In what ways can you now see that your home with Father God is much better than you ever imagined? Write about this in your journal.

Valuing Relationship

Let's go back to the story of the amazing father. In this story, the younger son only valued his father for what he could get from him. He did not value his relationship with his father. We can start "leaving home" in our relationship with our Heavenly Father when we value him more for what he can do for us than for our relationship with Him. He will continue to love us and welcome us home, but we need to choose to be at home with Him. We can then value Father God for who He is as our Amazing Father.

Right Needs – Wrong Places

*"Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **Luke 15:13 (NIV)***

The younger son left home and made a new life for himself by spending his inheritance in wild living. He still had the need to be loved and accepted but was now looking to have these needs met in all the wrong places.



Filling Our Heart-space

God has designed a space in every person's heart that needs to be filled up with love, acceptance, and comfort. However, people try to fill this space with things such as:

- Addictive substances (alcohol, nicotine and other drugs)
- Accumulating possessions
- Sexual relationships outside marriage
- Religious activity
- Pleasing people
- Positions, power and status



These things are all just substitutes for love. They will bring a kind of temporary comfort, but this comfort never lasts. There is always the need for more of these substitutes to fill this space in our heart.

The truth is that only a real and intimate relationship with Father God as beloved sons and daughters will fill this space in our hearts. Ultimately, nothing else will meet

our real need. The only place we will find perfect love and comfort that lasts is from our Heavenly Father.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever found yourself valuing God more for what He does for you than who He is? Talk with Him about this.

Life In The Pigpen

*After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. **Luke 15:14-16 (NIV)***

Under the Mosaic Law, the Jewish people of Jesus' time could not touch pigs or eat any part of them. Pigs were considered the most "unclean" of animals. In this context, the younger son ends up working with pigs and even longing to eat the same food as the pigs. Living with pigs is probably one of the most shameful and despised places a young Jewish man could find himself.



For this young man the reality, however, is much worse. He has exchanged his home with his father for this pigpen. Hopeless and alone in this place, he now feels a long way from home.

Remembering What A Loving Father You Have

*"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.'" **Luke 15:17-19 (NIV)***

While the son was with the pigs, what is the most important thing he did?

He began to remember what a good Father he has.



I believe this young man remembers what his father is really like. He had been willing to stop living like a son, but his father had never stopped being a loving father. The son realised that no matter how far he had wandered from home, his father would always welcome him back.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What was your “living with the pigs” experience in your life? What would be different for you now that you know that Father God is waiting for you to come home? Write in your journal.

Orphan Problem

How did the young man plan to return home?

As a servant

The younger son made a plan to return home to work for his father like one of the hired hands. He did not believe that he was worthy to be a son. He still had the heart of an orphan towards his father. As we will see in the next passage, there is only one way that the Father wants us to come home. What happens next, the young man could never have imagined!



The Father

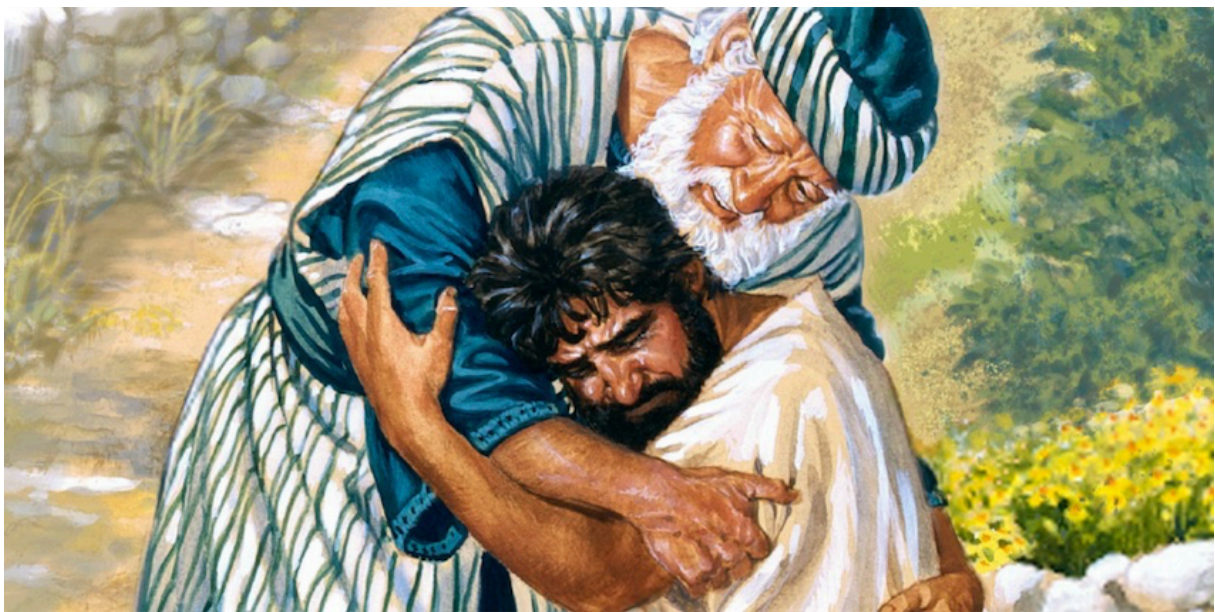
*So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. **Luke 15:20 (NIV)***

What would the son have looked like and smelt like after living with the pigs?

He would have stunk and probably been almost unrecognisable. No one would have wanted to go anywhere near him

Imagine this scenario: As the father runs up to his son he suddenly stops and screams, "What is that horrible smell? You look terrible! Get away from me! Go and clean yourself up and then I'll see you."

We know that this isn't what happened. This Amazing Father embraces his son and kisses him. He wasn't focused on his son's physical condition or afraid of getting himself dirty. The son's sin, rebellion, and failure did not keep his father away. This father loved his son unconditionally and wanted to come close to him.



Our Father in heaven knows us through-and-through and loves us unconditionally. Even in the midst of our failure, shame, and sense of unworthiness He will come to us and embrace us. He is not waiting for us to make ourselves clean or work to a certain standard to be acceptable. If you are His son or daughter, Father God wants to be close to you. He wants you to be at home with Him.

Even as His children, if we are "away from home" our Father will run to us to welcome us home. All we need to do is take one step towards him. Practically, this

means opening our heart to Him and saying, "Father God will you be a Father to me. I want to come home. I want to live in your embrace."

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever felt unworthy to come close to God? Do you think this way now? How will the truth of being fully embraced and loved even in failure and unworthiness change what happens next for you? Write in your journal.

Shame

And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." **Luke 15:21 (NIV)**

Even though he had just been welcomed home by his father, this son still felt unworthy to be a son. He was still living under the condemnation of his failure and was experiencing shame.

Adam said to his Father in the garden

... "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

Genesis 3:10 (NIV)

Adam was experiencing fear and shame, and so he tried to hide from his Father. Many of God's children still feel condemned and ashamed because of past sin and failure. Shame will cause us to try and hide from Father God. The truth is that He is running to us to embrace us, even while we are saying, "I'm not worthy to be called your son."



Like the younger son, we may believe that we have to earn our Father's love and acceptance by serving well and making ourselves clean or righteous. Fear, shame,

condemnation, and unworthiness are some of the old orphan clothes that need to be burned up once and for all.

The only way we can come home to our Father's embrace is just as we are. Father God comes to us and says, "I have already forgiven you. I have made you clean through my Son. Let me love you and make you whole. You are always welcome home just because you are my child. Let me embrace you."

Accepted as a Son

*"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. **Luke 15:22-24 (NIV)***

What were the four things the father did for the son after he embraced and kissed him?

He put His best robe on him, placed a ring on his hand, sandals on his feet and had a public celebration.

The main point to note here is that when we return home to our Father, it is always so much better than we could ever have imagined. As a good Father, He has so many good things in store for us.

Now, we will look at each of these four things that the father did for his son in more detail and see how they relate to us.

Best Robe

This robe the father placed on his son was reserved for honoured guests when they were welcomed into the family home. The robe was used to demonstrate honour. By placing this “robe of honour” on his son, the father was saying to him, son, “I fully accept you as a son in my family.”

There was nothing that the son had done to earn this place of honour. Father is saying to him, “I honour you as my son.” In fact, we know that the son had dishonoured his father by rebelling against him and leading a life that would have caused many fathers to turn their backs and sever the relationship. In this context, this demonstration of honour from a father to his son is astounding.



As we have already seen with Adam and Eve, sin causes shame and an awareness of spiritual nakedness. The father covers his son’s sin, shame, and nakedness. Here we see a beautiful prophetic act of love and forgiveness.

When we come home to Father God, we can experience this same kind of honour, acceptance, love, and forgiveness. Close your eyes and imagine your Heavenly Father placing the robe on you.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What has been the most shameful experience of your life? Do you believe that the Father wants to place His robe of honour around you and cover all your shame

with love? Speak with Him specifically about this and receive from Him. Write in your journal.

The Ring

The next thing the father does is to give his son his ring. Now, this was no ordinary ring. In fact, in our culture today we have nothing like it. The father's ring was used to do the father's business. It could be used for sealing documents, buying goods and property and as a full legal representation of the father. The wearer of this ring had the full authority of the father and could represent him in every way.



This special ring, given by his father, restored to the son the full authority to represent his father. At this point, we need to remember again what the son had done with his inheritance. He had squandered it all. If this were your son, would you trust him again so quickly? It might be more prudent to give a small measure of authority and to test if the son could be trusted. In this case, this is not what

happened. By giving him his ring, this father restores full authority to his son to represent him. We see here an incredible act of restoration and affirmation.

There is more. In giving the son his ring, the father also restored to his son his inheritance. The son had already received and wasted his inheritance. How could he expect anything more? This amazingly extravagant and generous father is saying to him, "There will always be an inheritance for you just because you are my son."



Father God desires to restore us to a place of full relationship with Him. A huge part of this is that we simply receive the authority and inheritance He gives to us as his sons and daughters. We can then represent Him fully. Imagine your Father placing his ring on your finger, and what this would mean for you.

The Sandals

In a Jewish household, slaves always went barefoot. This custom may have had something to do with the subservient place of the slave, or a more practical reason, like making it difficult for the slave to run away on the hot, rocky ground. Whatever the real reason, when the father puts sandals on his son's bare feet he is making a powerful statement.

Remember that the son's homecoming plan had been to become a servant and to work with his father's men. There was a deep sense of unworthiness in this young

man's heart. Maybe he hoped that one day he could earn his way back into a place of favour with his father. Now, his father is saying to him, "You are not a slave, you are my son."



This third action of the father would have spoken powerfully into the young man's identity as a son. He was wholeheartedly welcomed home into his father's presence and favour. This kind of relationship can never be earned but is freely given by our Heavenly Father because of His love for us.

Picture your Heavenly Father putting sandals on your bare feet and declaring that you are His son or daughter and that you are entirely free from every need to earn love. You are welcome in your Father's embrace, right now and forever.

The Feast

This father is not yet finished welcoming his son home. He arranges a big celebration and invites everyone around. If you grew up in a village or a small community, what was the common way that everyone heard the local news? It was word of mouth, right? When something important happens, the word will spread like wildfire from person to person and house to house.

I imagine that this would have been the case when the lost son returns home. Everyone would have known about what happened, and they would have been

talking. Maybe they were saying things like this, "Did you hear that the lost son came back? You know, the one who wasted his inheritance and ended up with the pigs. I've heard that he is going to work as one of his father's servants. Did you see how dirty he was when he came back? How could his father even recognise him let alone let him back in the house? I've heard that he is welcoming him back home. Surely, that can't be true. That bad son has brought so much shame to his father."



Whether or not the father was aware of this kind of talk, he wanted everyone to know that his son had returned home. He is celebrating the relationship that he has with his son and wants everyone to know that he loves and accepts him. To put this another way the father is saying to everyone, "I'm so proud of my son. I'm not ashamed of him. I'm so glad to have him home with me. I want the whole world to know who he is as my son."

Here we see a demonstration of the heart of Father God towards us. He is so proud that we are His children. He wants to "show us off" to everyone. No matter what our past, or even our current situation, our Father is so proud to have us as His children.

Homecoming

The father did everything he could to make sure his son was welcomed home. This experience would have been so much more than the son could ever have imagined

he was worthy to receive. Coming home to Father God is always so much better than we could ever have dreamed.



Remember, even though Jesus is telling this story, it is his Father speaking to us and inviting us to come home to be with Him. We don't need to be in the dire situation of this lost son to need a homecoming. Even as beloved children it is possible for our heart to wander from home. You might have left the Father's loving embrace for whatever reason, or maybe you have never experienced this kind of love from Father God. Maybe you just want to experience more of your Father's love for you. This is His invitation

Come home child

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Which of these acts of the father towards his son speaks most to you? Why? What need does this meet in you? Write in your journal.

Coming Home

The question you might still be asking is:

How do I come home?

The first thing to do is to remember what an amazing, loving Father you have. He is ready and willing to embrace you and be close to you. He is willing to come to you when you open your heart to Him. The Bible says very clearly in many places that Jesus has made a way for us to come to Father God. Father God desires us to be at home with Him. Nothing, except our own choice, can stand in the way of His desire for us.

Coming home involves our whole being – especially our heart and our emotions. Love must be received and experienced. It is not an intellectual exercise, but a heart reality. Coming home is like a little child jumping into their Father's arms and snuggling up close to His chest.

When we come home to our Father God, we discover that He is the one who is running to embrace us. Bringing His face close to us, He kisses us on the cheek. Then He continues the process of revealing us as sons and daughters – releasing all the good things He has planned for us to receive. These are the things that can only be received by sons and daughters living in an intimate relationship with their Heavenly Father.

- The son received a robe. Our Father honours us and shows us that He fully accepts us in His family.
- The son received his father's ring. We receive the full authority and inheritance of sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

- The son received sandals for his naked feet. Father God declares over us that we are not like slaves and that we never need to earn love.
- The son received a banquet. We can live under the gaze of the pleasure of our Father who wants to show us to the world as His children.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Do you know how to come home to the Father? What will this look like for you?

Write in your journal.

Prayer

"Father God. You are love. You are a good Father. You are my Father and you have always loved me. Even when I have been away from home, your heart has always been towards me, desiring me to come home."

"Thank you Jesus for coming to reveal the Father to me. You have shown me that He is a different Father who is always loving and forgiving. Father God, you are an Amazing Father."

"Father God I need to be home with you. Only you can provide all the things I need. You are my true source of affirmation, protection, comfort, peace, identity and destiny. I choose to love you for who you are, not just for what you do for me. Please forgive me for not valuing my relationship with you above all else."

"I confess that I have tried to fill the space in my heart with substitutes for your love. My heart has wandered from home. Today I choose your love. I want to come home."

"Father God, you know every way that I still think and act like an orphan towards you. Forgive me for trying to earn your love and acceptance. Today, I choose to come home just as I am and to receive your loving embrace. Thank you for forgiveness and for covering my shame. Thank you for running to me even though I am not perfect".

"Thank you Father for running to me now. I receive your loving embrace. I receive your love deep into my heart. Please restore me completely to your heart of love for me. I return home to you now. I receive everything you want to do for me as your child to welcome me home".

"Thank you that you honour me as a son or daughter and completely accept me into your family. You restore my inheritance and give me authority to live as your child and to represent you. You call me a son or daughter and not a slave. I never need to earn your love. Thank you that you are happy with me and that you want the world to know that you are proud of me."

"Please give me a deeper experience of your love every day. Keep me in your loving embrace. Help me to stay at home. Father God, I love you. You are a good, good Father. You are my Amazing Father. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Close your eyes and imagine what it is like to come home to the your Heavenly Father's embrace. Write about this in your journal.

Section Activity

1. Read the whole passage in Luke 15:11-32 two or three times until you could tell the story to someone without looking at the words.
2. Find a quiet place and make yourself comfortable. You may want to put on some instrumental worship music.
3. Open your heart to your Father's love.
4. Close your eyes and picture yourself in the place of the younger son as you remember the story.
5. See yourself coming home to your Heavenly Father. Your experience will be different than the Bible story but will be very personal to you. What does the Father do for you? What is He saying to you and about you? What is it like to be at home?
6. Rest in this place of your Heavenly Father's intimate embrace for a while.
7. Write in your journal about your encounter with Father God. What emotions did you experience? What did you learn? What is it like coming home?

Review Questions

1. What was Jesus' purpose in telling us the story about the father and the lost son?
2. Why was the son asking for his inheritance early such a serious problem?
3. What were the three aspects of "home" that we looked at in closer detail?
4. What is the only thing that will fill the empty space in our hearts?
5. What is the first step in coming home to Father God?
6. What was the main orphan problem the young man struggled with towards his father?
7. Why was the father unafraid to hug and kiss his unclean son?
8. What do the four things (robe, ring, sandals, feast) the father did for his son represent?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. To reveal to us what our Heavenly Father is really like.
2. The son was rebelling against his father and saying he wished his father was dead. The penalty for the son should have been death by stoning.
3. Security, comfort & affirmation.
4. A real and intimate love relationship with Father God as a beloved son or daughter.

5. Remembering what a good, loving father we have. We can choose to stop living like a son or a daughter, but He will never stop being our Father.
6. The son saw himself as a servant trying to earn his father's acceptance before he could be welcomed back into the family as a son.
7. Our Father knows us completely and loves us unconditionally. Even in the midst of our failure, shame, and sense of unworthiness He will come to us and embrace us. Love triumphs over all.
8. The robe represents the way He honours us and accepts us as His children. The ring represents the authority and inheritance He gives to us. The sandals represent sonship identity. The feast represents His desire to proudly show us to the world as His beloved sons and daughters.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Could you teach this story and include it in your personal testimony of your relationship experience with your Heavenly Father? Write down in your journal some of the ways that you might do this using this section as a starting point.

4. THE ELDER BROTHER

– DAY 36 –

Introduction

In this section, we will be looking at the second part of the story of the Amazing Father. The focus now shifts to the elder brother and his relationship with his father. Let's read the whole passage now.

*"Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'"**The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'"**"My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"* **Luke 15:25-32 (NIV)**



His Reaction

I want to begin this section by asking a couple of questions about the elder son.

How did the elder son react to his brother being accepted home by their father?

He was angry and would not go in to celebrate with them.

A deeper question is ...

Why did the elder brother react like this?

We don't know exactly what was happening in his heart, but he may have felt that it was very unfair that his younger brother was being treated so well by their father despite having left home and wasting his inheritance. Shouldn't he be the one to be rewarded for working hard and not disobeying his father? There is deep resentment in the elder brother's heart.



In this section, we will look at heart motivations. Our outward behaviour (words and actions) always flows from what is happening in our heart. The elder son can help us understand what is happening inside us.

No Value on Relationship

When we read the stories of both sons, it becomes clear that neither son valued the relationship they had with their father. They both saw him as a way to get what they wanted. They both had a servant mentality. This way of thinking was the complete opposite of the way the father related to them both.



– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Can you relate to the reaction of the elder brother? Have you ever reacted in the same kind of way? Write in your journal?

The Good Son

From this story, we could say that the following statements about the elder brother are accurate.

- He had never left home.
- He had obeyed his father in everything.
- He had worked hard and had done all the right things.

We could say that the elder son was the “good son.” He served faithfully and did everything he thought was expected of him. He worked hard and never disobeyed his father. On the surface, this all looks great, especially in comparison to his “bad” younger brother. However, it would be accurate to say that he was at home physically, but his heart was far away from home and also far away from his loving father. He did not have a real relationship with his father. There was no heart connection. Even though he was physically at home, the older brother also needed to come home to his father.



As we have already seen, even as children of God, we can also be working hard and doing all the right things. We can try to do everything we think is expected of us, yet our heart is not home with our Father. We can become like elder brothers ourselves. On the surface, everything looks fine, but we are not living as sons or daughters in the love relationship with Father God that He desires to have with us. Just like the younger son, we also need to come home.

Servant or Son?

Did the elder brother act more like a servant or a son?

A servant.

It is true that as believers we are called to serve God. However, our highest identity is as sons and daughters of the Father. We should serve from this place of love, acceptance, and belonging. If we believe in our heart that we need to earn God's love and acceptance, we will be living from the heart of a servant and not the heart of a son or daughter.

There is a big difference between the heart of a servant and that of a son or daughter. Servants can only bring others to a master to serve him as they do. Sons and daughters can bring others home to a loving Father!



Striving to Please

I believe that the real reason the elder brother slaved in the fields was that he was trying to earn his father's love and acceptance. The result was, the harder he worked,

the further away he felt from his father. If we try to earn approval by striving to please God, we can never experience the fullness of His love for us. The truth is:

"Love is a free gift, not a reward for service."

Earning love is impossible. We choose to love another based on the value we have for them. Conversely, we can only freely receive love as a gift from someone.



So, the heart question we need to ask ourselves is this:

Am I more like a servant working to earn the Master's blessing, or am I a beloved son or daughter who knows how to freely receive my Heavenly Father's wonderful love. Can I then live from this place of love and complete acceptance?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Have you ever tried to earn love from God? How did this work out for you? Knowing that love is a free gift, how might things be different now? Write about this in your journal.

Who Do We Look Like?

The father's heart was full of love and compassion for his younger son who had left home but had now returned. The father had always loved his younger son and now he can demonstrate this love in a way that his son can receive through their relationship. This had always been the father's intention towards his sons.

The elder son saw this demonstration of love towards his brother and instead of being joyful to have his brother home, he became angry and refused to join in the celebration. He did not want his brother to be blessed.



This shows us that:

The elder son did not have a heart like his father.

The way that we react towards others will show whether or not we share Father God's heart towards people. There are many ways that we can feel and act towards others that show that we are still like the elder son in some areas of our life.

Elder Brother Attitudes

Any way that we relate to others that does not look like Father God, we can call "elder brother attitudes."

Here are some examples that we can see in the elder brother in this story, and these can also relate to us.

- **Jealousy** (I am unhappy when God seems to bless others and not me).
- **Competition** (I will feel that I will miss out if I don't compete to be first).
- **Anger** (I am easily angered by what others say and do).
- **Offended** (I am easily offended by what others say about me or how they act towards me).
- **Pride** (I am better than others).
- **Criticism** (I am often finding fault with others).
- **Spiritual ambition** (what I do is more important than what others do).
- **Self-righteousness** (following the rules is more important than love).
- **Resentment** (I have an inner bitterness that comes from not being treated fairly).
- **Entitlement** (I have the right to be treated with special favour because of my position).

A word cloud on a dark grey background. The words are arranged in a vertical stack, with some overlapping. The words are: Jealousy (orange), Anger (orange), Criticism (yellow), Self-righteousness (yellow), Spiritual (green), ambition (orange), Pride (orange), and Offended (yellow).

Jealousy
Anger
Criticism
Self-righteousness
Spiritual
ambition
Pride
Offended

These are only a few examples of elder brother type attitudes. When we demonstrate these attitudes towards others, we are not looking like our Heavenly Father. We are not representing His heart. In fact, these kinds of attitudes cause a misrepresentation of the Father's love.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Which of these elder brother attitudes do you still struggle with from time-to-time? Write down a specific example in your journal. What are you going to do about this?

Looking Like Our Father

Understanding where elder brother attitudes arise in our heart can be helpful to bring change in our life, but there is something more important that we should be asking:

What is Father God really like? What is His heart towards others?

Father God is:

- Loving
- Compassionate
- Forgiving
- Generous
- Kind
- Humble
- Merciful
- Patient
- Good
- Faithful
- Gentle
- Self-controlled
- Joyful

Compassion
Mercy **Kindness**
Self-control
Patience **Blessing**
Love **Goodness**
Faithfulness
Gentleness
Humility
Forgiveness

You could add to this list many other qualities of Father God.

We know from the story that the younger brother had an empty stomach, but the older brother had an empty heart! The only way to avoid elder brother attitudes showing up in our lives is to receive the Father's love. As we receive His love, we also receive His heart. We need real experiences with the love of our Heavenly Father. As sons and daughters who are at home in our Father's love, we will then be like Him.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

In what area of your life do you look most like your Heavenly Father? In what area of your life do you look least like your Heavenly Father. Talk with Him about this. Write in your journal.

Religion or Love?

We are now going to have a look back at the beginning of Luke chapter 15. In this passage, and many others through the Gospels, we can clearly see elder brother type attitudes in operation in Jesus day.

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." **Luke 15:1-2 (NIV)**

In this passage, which groups of people gathered around Jesus?

Tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees and teachers of the law.

Sinners

The religious teachers in Jesus' time followed hundreds of laws and rules that they had added to the requirements of the Mosaic Covenant. People were called sinners when they did not follow all these rules. The amazing thing is that Jesus broke many of these rules just by being with "sinners." It was these "sinners" who were most comfortable with Jesus. They were able to receive love from Him, and they loved Him in return.



Religious Ones

In stark contrast, the religious teachers were not at all comfortable in Jesus' presence. They were offended by the love Jesus showed to "sinners". These were the ones they believed didn't follow all the rules and so rendered themselves unworthy of being blessed by God. Instead of loving Jesus, they despised Him.

Here we see a picture of what religion is like in contrast to love. Jesus is always showing His Father's heart. Speaking to the same religious people, Jesus said



"You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also" **John 8:19 (NIV)**

Jesus was saying to them, "You may have all the rules, but you do not know who my Father is. You don't know what He is like."

Keeping rules (even when they have a positive outcome if followed) is never the way to have a real relationship with Father God. When we know Jesus and the Father, we know that we are loved, and we will love them in return.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

*Where have you most been like a religious teacher towards a sinner in your life?
Write down a specific situation. How could this situation have been different if you
had loved that person from the Fathers' heart?*

The Pleading Father

*"The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **Luke 15:28 (NIV)***

What did the father do when his son refused to come inside?

His father pleaded with him to come inside and celebrate together.

It is noticeable that the father did not rebuke or scold his elder son for his behaviour. It was his son who was angry, and the father did not respond in kind. I love this picture of a father who is not offended by his son's bad attitudes and is instead entirely focused on bringing him home.

This word "pleaded" (Greek. *parakaleo*) has many meanings: ask, beg, encourage, exhort, urge, appeal, invite, comfort, make an appeal. We cannot miss the passion and intense desire of the father to have his son with him sharing the things that are most important to him.



The elder son misses the love behind his father's invitation entirely. He is only focusing on himself and what he thinks he is entitled to in contrast to his undeserving brother. His father is inviting him to open his heart and come inside. The elder son

chooses to remain outside physically, but also outside the influence of his father's love. Yes, he was offended and could justify his choice, but in the end, it was his choice.

Our Heavenly Father is desperate for us to come home to Him. When we are like an elder brother, our heart will struggle to come home to our Father. We belong on the inside in intimate relationship with our Father, not sulking on the outside. Father God invites us home to Him, and even pleads but never forces us. True love will never force a relationship. As I have already said, anything forced would not be love.

It's not fair!

But he answered his father, "Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends." **Luke 15:29 (NIV)**

Can you hear the heart behind the anger in the son's words? He felt that his father had been unfair to him, despite his best efforts. He was discontented in his heart because he thought that he hadn't received what he deserved, especially in comparison with his brother.

When we are like an elder brother, there will often be an unhealthy comparison and competition with others that will show up in our thoughts, actions, and words. A good indication of whether we think like this is how we feel when Father God blesses a brother or sister we know. How do we feel inside? Are we genuinely happy for them, or is there a "that should have been me" attitude?



The son himself uses the word "slaving." This word means to be enslaved or to serve as a slave. The use of this word and the whole tone of the son indicates that he saw himself as a slave and couldn't relate to his father as a beloved son.

The truth is that this father was good to both his sons and loved them both extravagantly. In the same way, our Heavenly Father loves each of us as children no matter the level of favour, anointing or blessing one might have compared with another.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Have you ever felt that it was not fair when someone else was blessed by God more than you? How did this affect the way you saw the person and related to them? What would be different now? Write in your journal.

Kingdom Family

*But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him! **Luke 15:30***

How did the elder son address his brother?

"This son of yours." He did not address him as "my younger brother."

Apparently, there was little genuine affection between the two brothers. We can say that the relationship was fractured or broken. There was no heart connection between them, despite them being brothers.



We know that broken relationships can occur within the family of God. Fractured relationships are a sign of orphan living and not the way that the Father desires for us to live as sons and daughters in the family of God.



Father God sees all His children as one big family. The Bible teaches that we should have a special love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. No matter what happens in life, nothing should be able to break the bond of love between brothers and sisters. I believe that we break the heart of Father God when we are not expressing true love towards one another. The heart of Father God is to bring reconciliation and restoration in relationships within His family. As sons and daughters, Father God has given us the ability to love like He loves and to play our part in bringing reconciliation and restoration in relationships within His family.

When we are like an elder brother, we have lost the ability to love others. There will always be a reason to justify broken relationships in the family of God, but the real question that we should be asking is, "What happened to my love."

Elder brothers need to come home to the Father to experience real love. Then we will be able to love one another.

Restoration or Punishment

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Galatians 6:1 (NIV)

This verse is quite clear about what we should be doing when a brother or sister sins. We should be looking for an opportunity to see them restored. I believe that

restoration involves the rebuilding of love relationships with other believers and also affirming them in who they are as sons and daughters of Father God so that they can live in their true identity.

The elder brother showed the opposite attitude towards his brother. He didn't care about his brother and probably felt that his brother should have been punished for his behaviour. In the elder brother's mind, punishment was more important than restoration, and so he closed his heart towards his brother.



When the people we love sin or fail in some way we have a choice to make. We can seek to restore them or see them punished in some way. Elder brothers want to make sure that people who fail are punished, and they don't care about love and restoration.

Just like the father in this story, Father God wants to restore His sons and daughters in a right relationship with Himself and other sons and daughters. When we love and restore people who fail, we look just like our Father. We always have a choice, and in fact, this is the privilege we have as sons and daughters in our Heavenly Father's kingdom family.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What does Kingdom family mean to you? What would this look like when someone fails? What would restoration look like? Write in your journal.

Father's Amazing Promise

"My son," the father said, "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."

Luke 15:31 (NIV)

What was the father's promise to his elder son?

"You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."

The father said to his elder son, "You are always with me." He is saying that as a father he is fully committed to this relationship with his son. This story gives us an excellent picture of the intimate relationship that Father God desires to have with his children. We can choose to live continually in His loving presence.

This elder son did not know that everything his father owned was already his. As we saw earlier, the son was living like a slave rather than a son in relation to his father. The elder son failed to see his true inheritance. A similar picture would be a prince who chooses to live like a beggar in the street rather than in the palace of his father the king.

*He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things. **Romans 8:32 (NIV)***

Father God desires to give us all things. We know this because he has already given us His wonderful Son. What a good Father we have! How do you want to live? Like an elder brother or as a son or daughter at home in the presence of your Father?

How Do We Come Home?

I think that we can all relate to being like an elder brother from time to time. In some cases, we may struggle with certain elder brother attitudes. The key to changing these elder brother attitudes is not in striving to change ourselves and do the "right thing." The real key is to come home to Father God in that area of our lives.

Here are some simple steps to help us to come home as elder brothers.

Firstly, we need to acknowledge that we have an elder brother problem. We need to be honest with ourselves and with our Father. Some of us have been performing for love and acceptance since we were children. Others of us know that we have an inability to love that affects our relationships.

It takes real courage to admit that while we may look good to others on the outside, we know in our hearts that we are not living in a genuine love relationship with our Heavenly Father. A real relationship is the main need of elder brothers. We need to acknowledge our need of Father's love. When we know that we are in need of love and ask our Father to fill us with His love, He comes to us and meets that need. In this place, heart transformation can take place.

Next, there is the need for genuine repentance. Repentance is not just feeling sorry for our sin or the things we have done wrong. Repentance is our Father's loving kindness leading us to a change of mind and heart that will produce good fruit that reflects our Father's love. Repentance is based on turning our heart towards the Father and receiving His love and affirmation which in turn provides a solid foundation for life and the way we live towards others.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What does the father's promise, "I am always with you, and everything I have is yours" mean to you? Talk with Father God about this and write in your journal what you hear.

Experiencing Love

We all need the unconditional love of a father. We all need the affirmation, affection and acceptance that only Father God can provide. Father God desires to bring us back into His embrace. He longs for us to experience the genuine love of a father, not just know about it.

Representing Father

Not only are we to receive Father God's love, but we are also to represent love to those around us. We may have discovered that there are times when we have not represented the Father's love well, especially to those who are closest to us. We may even have misrepresented Him. We may have been more concerned with seeing others punished rather than being a part of restoring and loving them. We may have hurt people with our harsh or critical words. We may have competed with others in the family of God. There are many ways that elder brothers misrepresent the heart and love of Father God.

A great way to begin the restoration process is to go to those we have misrepresented the Father to and ask for forgiveness. Remember, we are not going to point out their faults or accuse them of the things that have hurt us. We are going to ask forgiveness for the way we have not shown the Father's heart to them. We now have an excellent opportunity to be a part of restoring relationships and releasing God's love to one another.

As we come home to the Father and receive love, we will then be able to love others with the heart of the Father and represent Him well.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Do you need to experience the unconditional love of Father God? Receive the Father's love right now and rest in His love without doing anything.

Prayer

"Father God, thank you that you love me as your child and desire to have a relationship with me. You know my heart completely and want to draw me near to you your heart."

"I confess that I have been like an elder brother. Please forgive me. I have worked hard for you and tried to do the right things, but I have been trying to earn your love. I now understand that you already love me and that I can never earn your love and acceptance. I want to serve you with the heart of a son/daughter. Help me to understand that love always comes before rules."

"I confess that I have had wrong attitudes of anger, resentment, criticism, competition, striving and jealousy towards others. I have often not shown your heart of love towards others or represented you well as your son or daughter. My behaviour has damaged my relationship with you and my relationship with others. I turn away from these wrong attitudes and give myself fully to you. Please fill me with your heart of love and compassion so that I can represent you well. Please help me to see a reconciliation and restoration of the broken relationships in my life. Please forgive me and help me to seek forgiveness from others for the ways I have misrepresented your heart."

"At times, I have not been able to celebrate when you bless others. Thank you that I am a part of your family and that you love to bless all your children extravagantly. Help me to love all my brothers and sisters in the family of God. I choose to restore people when they fail, rather than see them punished."

"I know that my heart is not fully home with you and I want to come home. I have stayed away from intimacy with you and not known how to receive love from you or how to love you freely in return. Thank you that you are patiently waiting for me to open my heart fully to your love. Please restore my intimate heart connection with you as my Father. I open my heart to you now and receive your wonderful love. I come fully into your loving presence knowing that you accept me and will always desire to be with me."

"I receive the inheritance that you have for me, knowing that you are a wonderful, generous father who gives everything to your children. Thank you that I will never lack or need to be jealous of others."

"Father God, I want to stay at home with you. I want to live continually in your presence, knowing your embrace as your son or daughter. I love you. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Now that you have identified some elder brother attitudes, ask the Father to show you the opposite of these attitudes that represent His nature. What will this look like in your life? Write in your journal.

Section Activity

This activity follows directly from the prayer. It will require real courage on your behalf. Here are the steps.

1. First, think about the elder brother attitude that you have shown most towards others – especially other brothers and sisters in the family of God. Be specific and write this down.
2. Next, write down at least one person who has been affected by this elder brother attitude in your life.
3. Think about this person. Ask the Father to fill you with the opposite of the attitude that you showed. For example, if you were critical, then receive the Father's heart of encouragement for them. Ask the Father to fill you afresh with love and compassion and to give you His heart for them.
4. Ask Father for the best way and time to contact the person you have chosen (face-to-face, email, phone, IM, etc.).
5. Write down what you will say to the person. Ask forgiveness for the attitude and for not representing the heart of Father God to them. Take the opposite attitude and write something to them. For example, give them a word of encouragement.
6. Now, take what you have written and arrange to meet with the person or send it to them. Be ready to share the Father's love and what you have been learning and experiencing with them if they ask why you are doing this.
7. Make this a lifestyle practice wherever you can.

Review Questions

1. Did the elder son have a close relationship with his father?
2. From which place should we be serving God?
3. Write out the complete sentence. Love is a, not ... for service.
4. What does the way that we react towards others show?
5. What is the only way to avoid having elder brother attitudes?
6. What is more important – rules or love, why?
7. Describe the attitude of the father towards his elder son?
8. Why do elder brothers need to come home?
9. What was the father's promise to his elder son?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. No, he related to his father more as a servant than a son and did not value a close relationship with his father.
2. The place of love and acceptance that belongs to sons and daughters – our true identity.
3. Love is a free gift, not a reward for service.
4. Whether or not we have the heart of our Heavenly Father.
5. To receive the Father's love and to then represent this love to others.

6. Love is the only way to have a relationship with God and to show this love to others. Love is always more important than the rules.
7. The father pleaded with his son to come inside. He wanted his son to be with Him and to experience his love.
8. To experience the real love of their Father.
9. "You are always with me, and everything I have is yours."

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

*Are you taking enough time with each section before answering the questions?
Give time for the truths to sink into your heart as a revelation. Write in your journal
what the father is showing you.*

5. FATHER LENSES

– DAY 48 –

My Testimony

I have loved playing soccer ever since I was old enough to play. I would play during lunchtime at school, after school and on the weekends. Playing soccer was something that I enjoyed and helped me to feel connected with others as part of a team. However, during these years as I was growing up, there was one thing I wanted to happen, that never did. I wanted my father to come and stand on the sidelines and watch me play, but he never came. He was always too busy working or helping others in the community. I wanted him to be proud of me and to enjoy what I enjoyed. In many other ways my father was a great father, but in this area, I felt that he hadn't given me what I desired. I would see my teammates' fathers cheering for their sons, and this left a hole in my heart that I came to realise many years later had never been filled.



After finishing high school, I left my parents' home and went to live and study in another city. One day, I was praying with a good friend. As we were praying together, my friend suddenly exclaimed, "I see a vision of you playing soccer as a

child. Can I share this with you?" "Sure," I said. I had never told my friend about my desire for my father to watch me play soccer when I was younger. My friend shared the vision, "I see you playing soccer as a child. You have a big smile on your face and are really enjoying yourself. I can also hear someone cheering loudly for you from the side-line. It is Father God, and He has a huge smile on His face. I can see that He is so happy and proud of His son."

I immediately burst into tears as I remembered my heart's desire. This vision touched me in several ways. Firstly, I had not been a Christian growing up and now understood that Father God has been watching over me the whole time, drawing me into His family. He already knew me, even when I denied that He even existed.

However, something else happened at that moment. For the first time in my life, I understood that I was the son of a perfect Heavenly Father. I knew in my heart that He loved me and had always loved me. Father God is my Father, and the way that He had just communicated love to me was precisely the kind of good loving Father He wanted to be to me. My friend didn't know my heart's desire, but my real Father did. I decided at that moment that I really wanted to get to know this Father.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Is there a particular experience you remember with your earthly father that makes you realise now how much you need a perfect Heavenly Father? Write about this in your journal.

Fathers

Father God has always been Father. He is the Eternal Father. The origin or source of all fathering has always been the heart of Father God. When God created human beings who would be fathers, He had a special purpose for them. Father God designed all fathers to represent Him as the perfect Heavenly Father - to reflect love, kindness, and goodness to their children.



However, we know that because of the Fall and the orphan heart that came into the world as a result, often human fathers have not adequately represented the heart of Father God. Of course, this includes our own fathers. Our fathers have done things towards us that were wrong and have hurt us. There were other things that we needed from our fathers that they weren't able to give, often because of their lack of being fathered.

We have all been affected by our imperfect fathering experience. The person that we have become today is in large part the result of our experience with our father and mother. We might not be so aware of this at a conscious level, but it is true nevertheless.



How We See Father God

When we come into the family of God, there is a time when we begin to understand that there is another Father other than our own earthly father. While teaching us how to pray Jesus said



“Our Father in heaven ...” **Matthew 6:9 (NIV)**

One way or another we were introduced to God as our Father. Up until that point, our main experience (or lack of experience) with a father has been our own human father. When we are introduced to Father God, we all bring our own past father experiences with us. These experiences will colour the way that we know or see Father God. We can call these ways of seeing Father God our “father lenses.”



We naturally begin to “see” Father God through these “father lenses.” The result can be that we do not see Father God as He is, or that we have a limited view of who He is and what He is really like. For example: if our human father was never around and didn’t have a close intimate relationship with us, we may see Father God as not wanting to be near to us, as impersonal and distant. We may know in our head that this is not true, but our heart will still feel it. I had this kind of father lens, and it affected the way I saw Father God and related to Him.

The father lenses we have can be based on lies – and not on the truth of who He is and what He is like as our Father. To identify these lies and to change the wrong father lenses we carry, to ones that are true, we need the Father's help. As we have already seen in this school, Father God loves us completely. He is fully committed to revealing Himself to us as Father and to work in our hearts so that we can see Him and relate to Him as He actually is.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

When did you first start understanding that God is a Father? Have you experienced Him as your Father? How did this change you? Write in your journal.

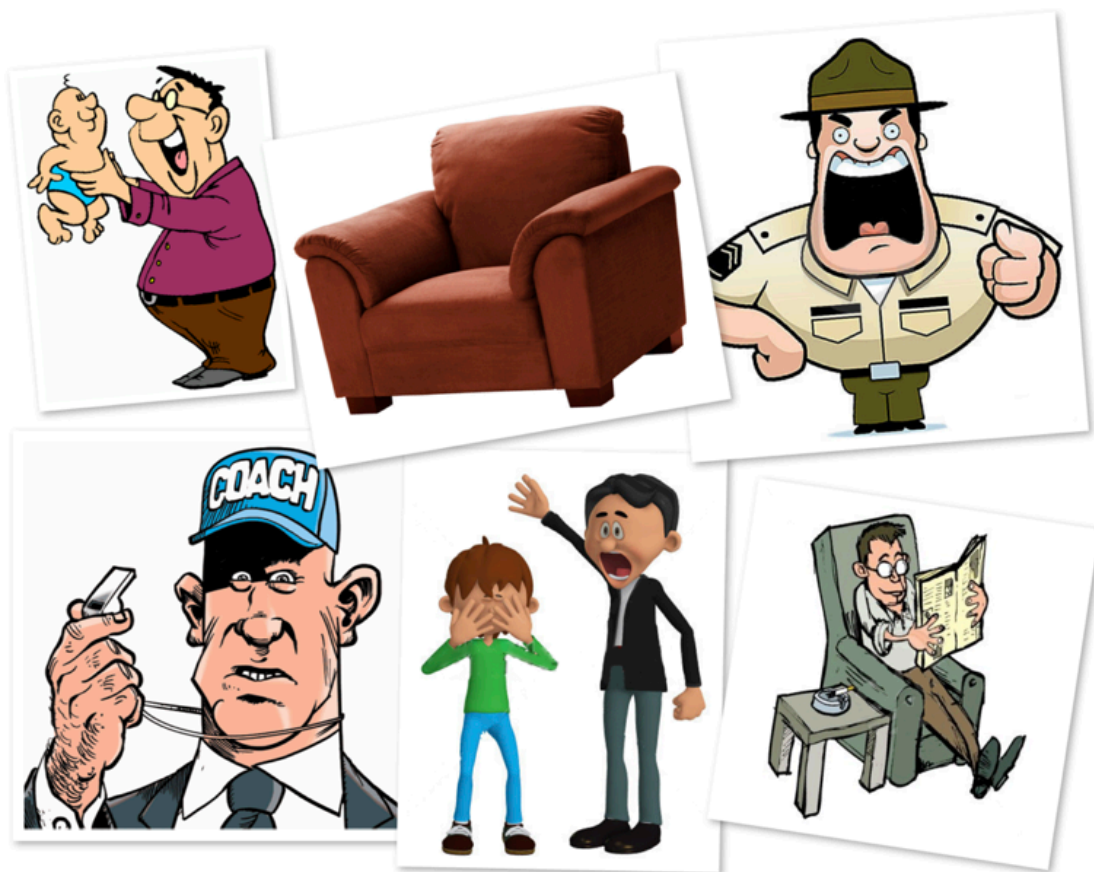
Father Types

In the last section, we looked at how our experience with an earthly father affected the way we see Father God. Our ultimate goal is to see Father God as He truly is, not just how we think He is. As we work towards this goal we need to answer these questions:

In what ways did our earthly father (or mother) relate to us that represented Father God well?

In what ways did our earthly father (or mother) relate to us that did not represent Father God well?

The answers to these questions will help us to see some of the ways that we may have an incorrect or inadequate picture of who Father God is. We then need to find the truth of what Father God is really like so that we can relate to Him as He is.



In the following sections, we will look at some different kinds of fathers. I invite you to open your heart and think honestly about your own father experiences – good and not so good. The purpose here is not to criticise or dishonour our parents in any way, but to help us understand our own heart and the way we see Father God. We can then develop an accurate picture of Father God that will enable us to relate to Him wholeheartedly.

To benefit from this process, we will need to be honest with ourselves and open our heart to Father God. Some of our father experiences may have been painful. Some of us never even knew our father. If you need someone to help you work through this process, I encourage you to find someone else you trust who is taking part in this school or someone else in your Christian family who is like a father or mother to you. Share this section of the school with them and tell them what is happening inside you. Then ask them to pray for you.

– **SECTION ACTIVITY** –

As you prayerfully consider your experience with your mother and father, I encourage you to open your heart to Father God. Ask Him to help you receive revelation that will help you see Him as He really is towards you and then receive healing from the past. Write what He shows you in your journal.

The Good Father

First, we are going to look at the good father. Here is a short story to illustrate the “good father.”

Belle discovered that she had been chosen to perform in the school play. She was given two free tickets to invite anyone she wished to watch her perform in the play. For Belle, this was a dream come true. Belle was so excited as she ran home to tell her parents. Finally reaching home, Belle rushed inside and saw her father sitting in the lounge watching TV. “Dad!”, Belle shouted joyfully “I’ve been chosen to perform in the school play. Will you come and watch me? Here are the tickets!” Belle handed the tickets to her father. “Of course I’ll be there Belle. I wouldn’t miss this for anything. I’m so proud of you. I know you will be amazing.” “Thanks, Dad,” replied Belle as she ran to tell her mother.

Belle practised hard every day for her role in the play and finally, the big day arrived. Later that evening while Belle’s father is driving to the school to watch Belle perform he receives a phone call from his boss. His boss insists that he come to the office right away as clients are waiting for him. Belle’s father tries to explain to his boss where he is going but his boss tells him that if he wants to keep his job, he must come right now. Reluctantly, Belle's father tells the boss he will be there right away.

A short while later at the school, the play begins. Belle has been looking for her father, but cannot see him. As she starts to sing her part, there are tears in her eyes as she searches the audience for her Dad. “Surely he will come,” she thinks to herself, “he promised me that he would.” Belle is so disappointed that her father was not there to see her perform.



This story shows us what a good father is like. A good father is a wonderful blessing in our lives, but even the best fathers have weaknesses, can fail or may not keep all their promises to us. Even the best earthly fathers are not perfect.

If we had a good father (or mother), then this is the lie that we can believe about Father God.

Our Heavenly Father is only as good as our earthly father.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1: 17 (NIV)

This verse shows us the truth about Father God. No matter how good our earthly father is, we need to see Father God as He is, our amazing, perfect Father.

Let's turn this revelation of who Father God is into a declaration. Read the following statement out loud:

"Father God, you are my perfect Father. You are always good to me. You have no weaknesses. You will never fail. You will never disappoint me, and you always keep your promises. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have a good father? How was he a blessing to you? In what areas was he not perfect? How did this affect you? How might this have affected the way you see Father God? Write in your journal.

The Demanding Father

Here is another story

Mark came home from school one day with his report card. He was anxious because he knew that he would need to give his report card to his father. Mark knocked on the door of his father's study. "Come in," said his father. "I received my report card today," Mark told his father. "Let me have a look," his father replied." Mark slowly handed the report card to his father and waited anxiously while his father read the report. It seemed to be taking an eternity. Finally, Mark's father said, "You only achieved a B+ average. That is not good enough! You can do better than that. I want you to try harder to achieve a higher grade next time. Do you understand?" "Yes, father, I will try harder," replied Mark. Mark left the room with a heavy heart, wondering how he was going to do better at school.

Six months later Mark received his next report card. He had worked harder than ever before and had achieved an "A" average. Surely his father would be happy now Mark thought as he handed the report card to his father. Mark's father looked at the latest report card and then exclaimed, "Well done Mark! I knew you could achieve more. I want to see you continue at this level and maybe next year you can get an A+ average." Mark could feel the pressure building inside him. Would he ever be good enough?"

This story illustrates the "demanding father." A demanding father or mother has high standards in various areas of our lives. These standards may include things like schoolwork, behaviour, speech, religion, etc. The standard is often higher than we feel that we can achieve and we may experience a lot of pressure in our lives.



The result is that we learn to perform to meet the standards that are set. We perform to be accepted. What we are doing is trying to earn love. It feels like, if we do well, then we are accepted, and if we don't do well, love is withheld from us. Love is conditional on our performance. We don't feel valued for who we are, but only for what we do.

If we have had this kind of experience with our father or mother, we can believe the lie that God is like the demanding father. He only loves and accepts me for what I do, not for who I am! If I do everything right, Father God will love me. If I fail to achieve the standards He sets, then He will reject me and find someone else to serve Him. We can find ourselves performing for God. I lived in this place for many years as a performing Christian.

Growing up I had a demanding mother. It seemed like I was never good enough, so I worked as hard as I could. On the surface, I did meet the standards, but inside I did not feel loved for who I was. This kind of living carried over into my relationship with God. I strived to work hard for God for many years. Striving and performance resulted in two periods of severe burn-out from Christian ministry in my life. I knew that I could not go on living like this.

"And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him, I am well pleased." **Matthew 3:17 (NIV)**

The words above are those of Father God speaking to His Son, Jesus, while He is being baptised in the Jordan River. The Father spoke these words to His son before Jesus had begun His public ministry. He had not done any miracles or preached the Kingdom of God and yet Father God declared that He was pleased with His Son. Jesus had done nothing to earn the love of His Father. Jesus relationship with His Father is an example of the unconditional love that our Heavenly Father gives to all His sons and daughters.

Father God loves you and me in the same way He loves His Son, Jesus. We cannot earn Father God's love; we can simply receive it. There is nothing you can do to cause God to love you any more than He does right now. There is nothing you can do to cause God to love you any less. Knowing that the Father loves us for who we are will enable us to rest and not strive to perform. The response of love in us will be to serve the best that we can, but serving is now from a place of rest - quiet confidence, peace and acceptance.

Speak the following declaration of truth over yourself:

"Father God, You are not a demanding Father. You love and accept me the same way you love and accept your son Jesus. You love me for who I am as your son or daughter and not for what I do for you. I do not need to earn your love or perform for you. I can live from this place of rest and love. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have a demanding father (or mother)? How did this make you feel? How might this have affected the way you see Father God now? Spend some time praying the declaration of truth over yourself. Receive this as a revelation into your heart. Remember to write in your journal.

The Passive Father

This next story is a little humorous, but still shows us something important about another kind of father.

Linda came into the dining room while her father was reading the newspaper. She could barely see her father's head above the top of the paper. Linda really wanted to share something with her father about a situation at school. "Dad," she said. "There is something I need to talk to you about." "Hmm," replied her father. Linda wasn't sure if her father was listening, but she pressed on anyway. "Dad, there is a boy at school who is always stealing my lunch money, and he is saying that he will hurt me if I don't give him more money. I'm afraid to go to school. What should I do?". "Hmm" intoned her father. Exasperated Linda shouted out, "Dad; the house is on fire!" Linda threw her hands up in despair when her father again said, "Hmm."

This story shows us a little of what a passive father can be like. A passive type of father is one who was there physically when we grew up but was not really interested in us. He was often too busy working or doing other things to be involved in our life. Passive fathers don't seem to be interested in our feelings or inner needs and struggle to share their emotions with us. There is often little outward expression of love through words or appropriate touch.



A passive father may be working hard to provide for the family. My father was a passive father. While growing up I never heard the words, "I love you." I've already shared with you the story about playing soccer as a child and wanting my father to enjoy this with me, but he never did. This kind of fathering will often cause us to close our hearts and make it difficult for us to give love and receive love. It wasn't until I had a son of my own and was acting like a passive father towards him just like my father had acted towards me, that I realised that I wasn't connecting with my son in the way that he needed me to.

If we had a passive father, our heart could believe the lie that Father God is also like this. God is too busy running the universe to be interested in every part of my life. We can believe that God does not express His love or emotions to us but just wants to tell us what to do. Father God can feel far away and unresponsive to us and our needs. We may believe that He won't be there when we really need Him.

But, the truth is

Look, if you sold a few sparrows, how much money would you get? A copper coin apiece, perhaps? And yet your Father in heaven knows when those small sparrows fall to the ground. You, beloved, are worth so much more than a whole flock of sparrows. God knows everything about you, even the number of hairs on your head.

Matthew 10:29-31 (NIV)

Your Heavenly Father cares about you and wants to be involved in your life. He is interested in everything about you, your deepest thoughts and feelings. He expresses His love for you in a way that can be received. Father God is not passive towards His children but actively involved with us.

Let's say together:

"Father God, You are not a passive father. You love me, know me and value me. You are always interested in me and want to be part of my life. I can receive all the expressions of love that you give to me. You will always listen to me and will be there when I need you. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have a passive father? How did this make you feel? How might this have affected the way you see Father God now? Spend some time praying the declaration of truth over yourself. Receive this as revelation in your heart. Remember to write in your journal.

The Absent Father

One day, David was talking with his mother. David is old enough to understand that he does not have a father at home like most of his friends. David says, "Mum, why don't I have a father like my friends?" His mother replied, "David when you were very little your father went to work in another city, but never came back home. He now has a new family in another place." David thought about this for a while and asked his mother, "Why would he do that? Didn't he love us?" With tears in her eyes David's mother said, "David, I just don't know."

This story illustrates the absent father. The absent father was not present in our lives. A father's absence may have been because of death, divorce, work or abandonment. Some of us may have never known a father, or we have experienced the pain of being separated from our father at some point.

My friend Sky, who is a policeman, had this kind of father experience. When he was six years old, his father developed a sudden illness and died. Even as an adult Sky felt that he had lacked the experience of being loved and protected by his father. There was always something missing in his life. Not having a father present in our lives can have a tremendous effect on us. We might find ourselves looking for the love and acceptance of a father from others, but there will always be a hole in our heart.



If we had an absent father, we could believe lies about what Father God is like towards us. In our head, we might know that these lies are not true, but our heart will feel something different. If we had an absent father, then we may feel that Father God will abandon us one day. He will not be there to love and protect us when we need Him. If we do something bad, He might abandon us.

But, the truth is that Father God says.

"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." **Hebrews 13:5b (NIV)**

Father God has promised that He will never abandon us. He will always be there for us as a good Father. He will never leave us like an orphan, but He will come to us when we need Him - every time! He is always with us, no matter what happens. Father God is the only one who can give us what we lack in our own experience with an absent father. Just ask Him.

Let's declare over ourselves:

"Father God, You are not an absent father. You will never leave me. You will never abandon me. You are always there for me. You are loving me and giving me what I lack in my experience of an absent father. I will never be like an orphan. You will be with me forever. Amen!"

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have an absent father? How did this make you feel? How might this have affected the way you see Father God now? Spend some time praying the declaration

of truth over yourself. Receive this as a revelation in your heart. Remember to write in your journal.

The Rule-keeping Father

Sam arrived home from school to find his father waiting for him at the front door. Immediately, Sam's father blew his whistle and shouted, "Stand at attention!" Sam stood up straight and looked at his stern-faced father. Holding a clipboard, Sam's father shouted at his son, "Have you done everything I told you to do?" "Yes, sir," Sam responded. Sam's father then began to check if Sam had changed his clothes, cleaned his room and washed his hair. One-by-one Sam's father checks these items off from his checklist. Finally, looking at Sam's shoes, his father asks, "Sam, have you cleaned your shoes?" "No, I haven't," replied Sam with a sudden knot in his stomach. "Didn't I tell you to clean your shoes?", Sam's father yelled. "Yes, you did, but I forgot," Sam replied meekly. "Go and clean them now! In the future so that you will learn to do what I tell you, today, you are not going out to play with your friends." "Yes, sir," replied a dejected Sam.



While this story may seem a little ridiculous, many of us can identify with growing up in this kind of home. This story illustrates the “rule-keeping” father (or mother). Home is rather like being in the army and father (or mother) is the commander giving orders. The most important thing in this kind of home is rules and obedience. The problem here is that we only feel that we are loved and accepted when we obey the rules. If we don’t follow all the rules, there is an expectation of anger and punishment. The motivation behind our obedience is often an unhealthy fear. We can end up believing that what we think or feel is not important and that we are less important than the rules and doing what we are told.

As Christians, we can carry this kind of experience over into our relationship with God. We can believe that God is a rule-keeping Father and that the Bible is His rulebook. Because of my experience growing up with a fear of punishment if I broke the rules, when I became a Christian, I believed in my heart that God was also relating to me like this. If I broke His rules, He would be angry with me and would not want to have a close relationship with me. This inner belief caused me to strive to do everything I thought God wanted from me. I believed that God was more

interested in me obeying His rules than He was for me to experience His love and freedom.

Jesus told an amazing story. Here we read the last part of the story.

Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." **John 8:10-11 (NIV)**

Do you remember the story of the woman caught in the act of adultery? How did Jesus act towards this woman who had broken the rules? We know that he did not follow the wishes of others who wanted to punish her as the law dictated. In fact, there is no sign of punishment in Jesus' words or actions. I believe that Jesus is saying to the woman, "In this situation, you may feel powerless, but you are powerful. You can choose the right thing, not because the rules say so, but because I love you and I believe in you. Go and live powerfully." Jesus was demonstrating that love is always more important than the rules and that love creates a place where people are free to be the best that they can be. In this situation, Jesus was demonstrating the incredible love of His Father. Father God is like this towards us. He is such a good Father. He is not a rule-keeping Father.

Let's declare together:

"Father God You are not a rule-keeping father. You are not checking to see if I have obeyed all your rules. You are not waiting to punish me when I fail. You always want to show your amazing love to me. You say that I am powerful and you are calling out the best in me. Amen"

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have a rule-keeping father (or mother)? How did this make you feel? How might this have affected the way you see Father God now? Spend some time praying the declaration of truth over yourself. Receive this as a revelation in your heart. Remember to write in your journal.

The Abusive Father

Lucy approached her father one day with more than a little trepidation. "Dad," Lucy said, "My teacher gave me this letter to give to you." Lucy's father opened the letter and slowly read the contents while Lucy waited anxiously. Lucy could see the growing cloud of anger on her father's face. Lucy drew back in fearful expectation of what she knew was to come. Finally, Lucy's father exploded in anger shouting at Lucy, "Your teacher says you have not been paying attention at school. You spend most of your time day-dreaming rather than paying attention to your work. How can you be so stupid? If you stay like this, you will never achieve anything with your life. You will be a failure. Your cousins are much smarter than you. You should be more like them! Do you know how much money I spend to send you to this school and this is what you do!" Lucy's father raised his hand to strike Lucy, but she was already running for the door with tears streaming down her face. Lucy ran out of the house and down the street before finally stopping and bowing her head in shame.

This story shows us something of what the abusive father is like towards his children. An abusive father (or mother) hurts us in the most profound possible way. God gave us fathers to protect us and to provide a safe and secure place to be who we are. Our father should be someone that we trust, but an abusive kind of father violates this trust and leaves us fearful and full of shame.



We can divide abuse up into three general categories – physical, emotional and sexual abuse. Physical abuse includes beatings, being deprived of what we need or other things like being locked in our room alone. Emotional abuse takes the form of harsh, demeaning words, lack of expression of love or failure to meet any of the basic emotional needs we have as a child. Sexual abuse includes wrong touching, sexual activities, inappropriate language and being exposed to sexual media.

At this point, I need to say something specifically about sexual abuse. Many cultures try to hide this problem, and people never talk about it. If you have been sexually abused, please get some help. Find a spiritual father or mother you trust and share with them what happened to you. Ask them to pray for you and help you on your journey to healing and wholeness. Know that Father God loves you completely and let Him embrace you with His love.

If our father or mother have abused us in any of these ways we may experience guilt or shame. Guilt says to us that I must have done something wrong. Shame says

to us that there must be something wrong with me. We can be left with a deep sense of rejection and unworthiness inside us. The human response to abuse is that we close our heart to protect ourselves. Closing our heart affects our ability to trust others and even to trust Father God.

In our heart, we can believe a lie about Father God. The lie is that He is not safe and that I need to keep my distance from Him. If I open my whole heart to God, He will probably hurt me in some way. Remember, these kinds of responses are often not at a conscious level, but they come from our heart and cause us to have difficulty in forming intimate and trusting relationships, even with Father God. It is safer to keep Him at a distance and believe that He doesn't want to be close to me. In this place, it is difficult to receive love from Father God and to live as a beloved son or daughter.

But, the truth is found in something Jesus says in Luke's gospel.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" **Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)**

Father God is our safe place. We can come close to Him without fear. We can always trust Him to care for us completely. We can open our heart fully to Him knowing that He is always kind and loving towards us. Father God never uses fear or punishment to influence us. He always wants us to be at home with Him. He wants us to live in His loving embrace.

So, let's declare:

"Father God You are never an abusive father. You are my safe place. You will never hurt me. You always love and protect me. You always have the best in mind for me. I can trust you fully. I can always be at home with you. I can know your loving embrace. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Did you have an abusive father (or mother)? How did this make you feel? How might this have affected the way you see Father God now? Spend some time praying the declaration of truth over yourself. Receive this as a revelation in your heart. Remember to ask someone to help you if you need to.

Summary

As you have been reading about the different types of fathers, you may have found yourself relating to these kinds of experiences from one or more type of father. To be honest, I can relate to all of them in different ways with my father or mother. I know that these experiences have given me “father lenses” that have distorted my view of what Father God is really like towards me. I know that a misrepresentation of Father God contributed to the “father lenses” I brought into my relationship with Him. I’m so thankful that Father God has given me new Father lenses based on the truth of who He is.



How about you? Are you receiving your new Father lenses? Are you seeing Father God more and more as He really is and not just as you think He is? Are you experiencing His amazing love and acceptance that will enable your heart to connect with His heart of love for you?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How has the way that you see Father God changed as you have seen the truth of who He is? Write about this in your journal.

Section Activity

Review from your journal your father or mother experiences and how these have affected the way you see and relate to Father God.

For this activity, you will need someone to help you. Ideally, this is someone else who is also participating in this school or someone you know who has a close relationship with God.

Ask the person to put their hands on your shoulders and look into your eyes. They are going to represent Father God to you. Ask them to speak these words to you as though Father God were saying them to you.

"Father God says to you ..."

"Everything that you have lacked from your earthly father or mother, I can give to you."

"I am your perfect Father."

"I am a good Father."

"I love you unconditionally."

"I accept you completely."

"I am interested in you."

"I want to be a part of your life."

"I am always available for you."

"I love you for who you are."

"You are worthy because I have made you worthy."

"You never need to earn my love."

"You don't need to perform for me."

"I will never leave you."

"I will never abandon you."

"I am always with you."

"I will always be there when you need me."

"If you fail I will not punish you."

"I'm waiting to show my love to you."

"You are powerful!"

"I am your safe place."

"I will always protect you."

"You can trust me."

"Today, I give you new Father lenses, so you can see Me as I am."

"I am your loving Heavenly Father."

Give each other a big Father God love hug!

Prayer

“Father God, I thank you that the door to your heart is always open to me. I thank you that you love me and accept me fully. I come to you now as a child in need of your help. I acknowledge that my experiences with my father and mother have affected my heart and the way I relate to you.”

“Firstly, I thank you for the good things my father and mother have done for me and the ways they have represented your love well. Thank you for the provision, protection, and encouragement they have given me. I honour my parents today, but, there are some things I need to forgive them for”

“I choose to forgive my father and mother for each way they have misrepresented your Father love to me. I forgive them for the times they have disappointed me, let me down or broken promises they made to me. I forgive them for making their love conditional on my performance. I forgive them for not expressing love to me or being interested in what was important to me. I forgive them for not comforting me when I was hurting or understanding my feelings. I forgive them for not being there for me for whatever reason. I forgive them for any way that they abused me physically, emotionally or sexually. I choose to believe the words that you speak to me and ask that your words would replace every negative word they have spoken over my life.”

“Holy Spirit I ask that you show me things that happened with my father and mother that have hurt me and affected my heart and relationship with you. Father God, I invite you into these memories and experiences and allow you to comfort me as your child. I receive your love to heal my heart. I give the pain, anger, and disappointment to you.”

"Father God, please forgive me for believing lies that have hindered me from seeing you and relating to you as you are. Forgive me for striving to please you when you are already pleased with me. Forgive me for any way that I have been trying to earn your love and acceptance."

"The declarations I have made about who you are as my perfect Father are true today and every day. Today, I receive new Father lenses. I receive the truth of who you are and what you are like to replace every lie I have believed in my heart. Open my eyes to see you as a wonderful, perfect father and enable my heart to relate to you as my good, good Father. I choose to trust in you fully."

"In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen"

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Ask the Holy Spirit to take you deeper as you forgive your father or mother. Ask Him to show you more truth about the nature of Father God. Spend some time resting and listening in His presence. Write in your journal what He shows you.

Review Questions

1. Where did fathers and fathering originate?
2. Why did God give us fathers?
3. What experiences have the most significant effect on the way we see Father God?
4. Can you name the different types of fathers?
5. How does even a good father give us an incorrect view of Father God?
6. What are the three kinds of abuse?
7. How is Father God enabling us to see Him as He really is?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. In the heart of Eternal Father God.
2. Father God designed earthly fathers to represent Him - to reflect His love, kindness, and goodness to their children. This was the original purpose given to all fathers.
3. The experiences we have had with our father and mother. These have created our "father lenses" that we see Father God through.
4. Good father, demanding father, passive father, absent father, rule-keeping father, abusive father.

5. We can believe that Father God is only as good as our earthly father. He is good, but not perfectly good.
6. Physical, emotional and sexual.
7. He is giving us new Father lenses that are based on His ptruth and not the lies we may have developed through our own negative experiences.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

As you complete these review questions, what has spoken the most to you in this section. Write in your journal.

6. HEART FORGIVENESS

– DAY 61 –

Forgive from the Heart

The revelation about heart forgiveness contained in this section has had a powerful impact on my life. For this, I need to acknowledge New Zealander James Jordan from whom I first heard this message. This revelation has become a heart revelation to me, and I pray that it does for you as well.

At the very end of Matthew chapter 18 Jesus says:

“This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” **Matthew 18:35 (NIV)**

Jesus says that we must forgive from our heart. He is saying that forgiveness involves much more than just using our mind or thought processes. Ultimately forgiveness is a matter of the heart. So, the vital question we need to ask is this:

Why must we forgive from our heart?

Because it is in our heart that we carry the anger, wounds, and pain caused by the words and actions of others. Therefore to fully forgive, our heart must be fully involved.



Father God wants us to be free from the negative things we carry in our hearts from our experiences with others. The only way that we will indeed be free is if we learn how to forgive from our heart. Ultimately, Father God wants us to love others in the same way that He loves us. It is impossible to love as God does without heart forgiveness. You may have heard the topic of forgiving others preached and taught many times, but I encourage you to read on and discover new revelation and freedom.

How Much Should We Forgive?

In the Gospel of Matthew, Peter asks Jesus a question about forgiveness.

*Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. **Matthew 18:21-22 (NIV)***

To give some context to these words, we need to understand that the Jewish religious teachers of Jesus' day taught that people must only forgive someone three times. After this, the person did not need to forgive. Knowing this requirement for forgiveness, Peter suggests that he could forgive seven times instead of the required three. However, even though this increases the threshold for forgiveness, this is still man's way of dealing with problems between people. As we shall see, this is not God's way.



As human beings, we tend to look for a law to follow or rule to apply to sort out problems with others. Every society has some system of law and consequences for breaking the law. Jesus is always revealing what the Kingdom of God is like and that this Kingdom is often in conflict with the ways of this world. In this case, Jesus shows us that Peter's, or the human way of thinking, is wrong and inadequate.

Jesus says to Peter that we should forgive seventy-seven times (or four hundred and ninety times depending on your translation). Was Jesus putting a number on the number of times we should forgive someone? Obviously, this is not the case.

So, what was Jesus saying about forgiveness?

I believe that Jesus was saying to Peter and us that we can and should always forgive.

~~3 times?~~

~~7 times?~~

~~490 times?~~

ALWAYS FORGIVE

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What does forgiving from your heart mean to you? What do you think Jesus was saying? Write about this in your journal.

Forgiveness Parable

After His conversation with Peter, Jesus goes on to tell His disciples a significant parable which illustrates this truth that we should always forgive.

Lets read the first part of this parable.

“Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ The servant’s master took pity on him, cancelled the debt and let him go.” **Matthew 18:23-27 (NIV)**



In this parable, there are two characters who have been introduced so far - a master and his servant. Parables always have a deeper meaning, and so we need to ask the question

Who do these two characters represent?

I believe that the master represents God and the servant represents all people, including us.

Settling Accounts

Here is another important question to help us extract the revelation contained in this parable.

What is the first thing the master does in this story?

The master settled accounts with his servants

Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven is like a king who settles accounts with his servants. The king wanted to know exactly how much was owed to him. We don't know why the king did this or if it was a regular practice, but we need to ask the question:

How does this apply to us in the context of forgiveness?

The answer is this: If we are going to forgive, the first thing we need to know is, what someone owes us. When someone offends us in some way, they always take something from us. This may or may not be something physical or monetary, but there is always a debt created that is owed to us. An example we have already looked at is a father who verbally abuses his daughter. The debt he owes his daughter is the loss of love, dignity, and self-esteem in her life. Where there is an offence against us, there is a debt created which that person owes us.



An Impossible Debt

The king discovers that his servant owes him ten million pieces of silver. Imagine a huge pile of ten million silver pieces. This is a ridiculous amount of money! Even in a hundred thousand lifetimes, this servant could never repay this debt to the king. Jesus' point is not the amount of money. It was impossible for the servant ever to repay what he owed the king. The servant is in an impossible position.

Next, we see that the king, understanding his servant's impossible situation, has compassion for him. This compassion leads the king to do something outrageous. He completely forgives this huge debt that is owed to him. We know that the servant owed his master ten million pieces of silver.

How much did it cost the king to forgive the debt?

Ten million pieces of silver

Let me demonstrate this with a more contemporary example. Imagine that you are riding on the bus and you discover that a thief has stolen \$10 from your pocket. To forgive the debt owed to you by the thief it would cost you \$10, correct? Now, how about if you later discover that the same thief has also stolen your credit card and racked up a debt of \$100,000. To forgive this debt how much would it cost you? It would cost you \$100,000.

When we forgive it will cost us something depending on the size of the debt owed to us.



Heart forgiveness means completely giving up what someone owes us. The person who has caused offence to us or taken something from us does not need to repay us. Through forgiveness, we cancel the debt that they owe us. Cancelling the debt will cost us what is owed to us. We will never require the person to either pay us back or suffer in any way for what they have done. We wave goodbye to the debt and any hold that it has on us.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What have you learned about understanding the debt owed to you before you can forgive from the heart? Do you have a situation where you can now apply this kind of forgiveness? Pray about it now.

The Second Servant

We have just seen what it means to cancel a debt by forgiveness, but Jesus has more to reveal about forgiveness. He continues with the parable.

“But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. ‘His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’ “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” **Matthew 18:28-35 (NIV)**



The first thing that we notice in this second part of the parable is that the second servant owed the first servant a measly ten pieces of silver. The crazy thing is that the first servant wasn't even willing to forgive this tiny amount.

The Contrast

Jesus is making an incredible contrast. The first servant has his debt of ten million pieces of silver cancelled by his master. Then he refuses to cancel the debt owed by his servant of ten pieces of silver.

*When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins. **Colossians 2:13 (NIV)***

How much have we been forgiven by God?

When we are In Christ, God has forgiven all our sin. Any debt we could owe God, He has fully cancelled. This is incredibly good news.



In this parable who does the second servant represent?

Everyone we need to forgive

Here is the real contrast. Just like the first servant, in Christ, we have been forgiven a debt that was impossible for us to repay. However, unlike the unmerciful servant, we are able to cancel the debts of those we need to forgive, no matter what

the size. Anyone we need to forgive owes us a tiny debt in comparison to the debt we have had forgiven. We now have a choice to make.

*Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **Colossians 3:13 (NIV)***

We can choose to hold on to unforgiveness or we can forgive in the same way that we have been forgiven.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Do you hear the Father speaking to you? How will this truth of forgiveness help you in future? Will things be different? Write about this in your journal.

What Happens If We Don't Forgive?

We see that the first servant wanted his servant to suffer and pay the consequences for not being able to repay the debt owed to him immediately. There was no mercy on display in his heart. When we choose not to forgive someone we are saying, "I want you to pay me back, and until you do you should suffer the consequences." Payback may take the form of holding back love and blessing from someone who has offended or hurt us.



The first servant finds himself thrown into prison by an outraged king. When we refuse to forgive, even though God forgives us, we are locking ourselves in a prison of our making. When we hold on to bitterness and anger in our heart and desire for the person to pay for what they have done to us, we are the one who suffers. Unforgiveness is like a disease in our heart. It does not matter how unfair or unjust the offence was towards us, if we refuse to forgive from our heart and cancel the debts owed us, even God cannot help us. He has given us the authority and the responsibility to forgive.

If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." **John 20:23 (NIV)**

Only heart forgiveness will set us free. The good news is that when we forgive others, they are also forgiven and set free. In fact, Jesus says they can't be forgiven until we forgive them. This truth shows how important it is to forgive in every situation. The Father has given us incredible authority. The question we must ask ourselves is: Will we use this authority to forgive and keep forgiving?

True Freedom

There is one more incredible piece of good news regarding forgiveness - when we forgive we look just like our Heavenly Father. When we forgive we represent Father God's love to those who have hurt us. Even in the midst of our pain and woundedness, Father God is reaching out through us with His love.

I would like to finish talking about forgiveness by giving you a picture to remember the revelation that you have received.

Imagine two friends. One friend offends the other, and the other is offended and hurt. Picture the first person who did the offending placing their hands on the shoulders of the person they offended. Where there is no forgiveness, these two people are now joined together. They are both not free. Father God is standing behind them waiting for them to forgive so He can enable them to experience freedom. This pattern can continue as a chain with many people joined together in offence and missing out on their freedom. When the first person who was offended forgives from their heart and cancels the debt owed to them, they are instantly set free and can now experience freedom by turning and relating to Father God more deeply. Father God was always waiting for them and loving them, but forgiveness needed to occur before He could move towards them.

This person is us. Will you forgive everyone who has offended you so that both of you can be free to experience Father God more and more?

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Who do you still need to forgive from your heart? Are you willing for them to be free no matter what they have done? Pray about this now.

My Testimony

I would like to share with you now my testimony about the power of heart forgiveness and what this looked like for me.

Around 30 years ago, while still single, I had the privilege of being a part of a church planting team. It was a time of growing spiritually and being stretched, but it was also a season of encountering new relational challenges in the family of God.

One day, I decided to visit some friends at their house - a flat of six single Christian ladies. While we were chatting in the lounge one of the sisters suddenly began to make all kinds of untrue accusations about me in front of everyone. I won't go into the nature of what she accused me of here, but they struck me like the proverbial "tonne of bricks." I was one of the leaders in the church and campus ministry, and I felt that this sister was attacking my integrity as a leader in the things she was saying. What would people think of me?



I opened my mouth to begin to refute the accusations, but nothing came out. I was stuck somewhere between rage and bewilderment and decided to get out of there as quickly as I could. I'm not recommending this as the best course of action, but avoiding further conflict seemed to be the easiest path to take. However, the offence became stronger and stronger in my heart. I couldn't think of anything else. I experienced a complete range of emotions over the next few days - sadness, anger,

confusion, unworthiness, and fear, etc. As I look back now, I knew that I was trapped in a prison of unforgiveness. My heart was a mess, and it was affecting my relationship with God.

A few days later I decided to attend a home-group meeting for university students. While everything looked OK on the outside of me, my inside was still in turmoil. How could I draw near to God and worship Him in this state? As we were worshipping, suddenly I heard the voice of the Lord saying these words to me, "I want you to bless her." I was astounded. I instantly knew He was talking about the sister who had accused me. How could I bless her when she had done this to me? In my heart, I said to the Lord, "No way am I blessing her. She does not deserve it for what she did to me!" Then I heard the voice of the Lord again quietly saying, "I want you to bless her." At this point, I remembered that this sister had grown up in an extremely dysfunctional family and had been abused by her grandfather. Just like the king, in the parable, I found that compassion was replacing the desire for judgment and vindication in my heart. I quietly said the words, "I bless you with the fullness of God's blessing."

As soon as I had spoken the words, the Holy Spirit opened my spiritual eyes, and I had a vision. I could see the sister who had accused me standing there alone in the dark. Suddenly the heavens opened up, and light poured down on her. I knew that this was the love and power of God streaming into her life. I began to weep quietly. I knew at that moment that I had forgiven this sister because the desire of God to bless her was far more powerful than my offence. In His wonderful grace, He allowed me to share in His heart of love.

The next day, with no initiation from me, this sister, came and found me. She told me that there was something she needed to tell me. She apologised for the things that she had said. She then went on to say to that she had spoken to the other leaders and confessed that the problem was all hers and that nothing that she had said was true. She asked me to forgive her. I told her that I had already forgiven her

and shared the vision that I had received the night before. Something had happened in her heart. Forgiveness had released the Father's love into her life in a powerful way. Looking back now I realise that we were both receiving a new measure of freedom. I now realise that it is moments like this that we look the most like our Heavenly Father. In this situation, I had lots of help from the Father. It was like He was holding my hand and leading me to freedom. Now, with a few more decades of walking with Him, I hear Him say, "heart forgiveness can become a lifestyle for you, something that you release whenever it is needed."

I pray that you would have your experiences of radical heart forgiveness that release freedom, love, and blessing for you and others through you.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

From my testimony what do you understand about the heart of God towards people even when they sin? How will this affect the way that you forgive? Write about this in your journal.

Section Activity

The purpose of this activity is to help you experience a new level of heart forgiveness. For this to occur, we need to be very honest about the negative effect that the words and actions of others have had on our lives. We need to be able to understand the debt that is owed. This process can be uncomfortable and can seem to be critical and judgemental of others. The enemy can try to bring condemnation into our heart. The first thing to understand is that the Father only brings negative things in our heart to the surface when it is accompanied by His promise of transformation and growth. Secondly, we are being honest about the effect that others have had on our hearts with the intention of releasing forgiveness and love, not judgment.

One way to understand the debt owed to us by someone is to write a letter to them outlining what they did and said and how this affected us. In this letter, we can freely express our thoughts and feelings. At this stage let me say that you do not need to send this letter to the person. The letter is a tool to help you understand and cancel the debt that is owed to you.

I would like to invite you to write this letter to your mother or your father or separate letters to both of them.

For example, you may write things like:

“Dad, I forgive you for the times you beat me harshly while you were drinking. Your drinking made me feel afraid of you and damaged our relationship. I wanted to be close to you, but you never opened your heart to me. I wanted so much to hear you say that you loved me and believed in me, but you never did. There is so much

that I wanted to say to you, but you were always too busy for me. I felt that you had more time for others than for me.”

Take as much time as you need to write. Ask Father God to help you understand the debt that is owed you. After you have written the letter, please look at the following prayer.

Prayer

Before you pray through this prayer, read through the letter you wrote to your mother or father.

Let's pray

"Father God, thank you for forgiving me completely and cancelling the debt that I owed you. It was impossible for me to repay this debt, so you chose to cancel it because of your great love and mercy. Father God I ask that in the same way, you forgave me, that you would help me to forgive from my heart."

"I have written down the debt that my mother/father owes me. You have seen everything I have written. You know everything I have thought. Today, I choose to cancel the debt my mother/father owes me. "Dad, Mum I cancel this debt. I forgive you from my heart. I give you the gift of forgiveness."

"Father, I ask you to forgive me for the wrong things I have done. I have judged my mother/father. I have had wrong attitudes in my heart. I have said hurtful words. I have had anger in my heart. Please forgive me for these things."

"I release anger, disappointment, and pain from my heart. I give up the right to judge and to withhold love and blessing from them. I thank you that as I forgive my mother/father, they are also forgiven."

"Thank you, Father, for setting me free. Thank you for setting my mother/father free. Help me to continue to use the authority you have given me to set others free. Please fill my heart with your love. Help me to be quick to forgive. Thank you that when I forgive, I look just like you. As your child, I want to be more and more like you."

"In Jesus' wonderful name. Amen"

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Expand this prayer to include others you need to forgive such as family members, spiritual parents and leaders.

Review Questions

1. How did Jesus say that we must forgive?
2. Why do we need to forgive from our heart?
3. How often should we forgive people?
4. What is the first thing that we must know if we are going to forgive from our heart?
5. What does it cost us to forgive?
6. How can we completely forgive others?
7. Who does heart forgiveness set free?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. Jesus said that we must forgive from our heart. We call this heart forgiveness.
2. Because it is in our heart that we carry the anger, wounds, and pain caused by the words and actions of others. Therefore to fully forgive, our heart must be fully involved.
3. We should always forgive. Father God gave us this pattern of forgiveness.
4. We must know the debt that people owe to us to forgive them from our heart.
5. Heart forgiveness costs us any right we have for the person to “repay” us. Practically, this means giving up all judgment and no longer withholding love.

6. God has completely forgiven our debt. Now, by being like Him, we can completely forgive others in the same way.
7. Heart forgiveness sets both the one forgiving and the one forgiven, free.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Would you be able to take this teaching and share with a group about forgiveness? If you can't, then you need to review this section again. Prepare a message on forgiveness based on this teaching and share it with someone.

7. ETERNAL LOVE

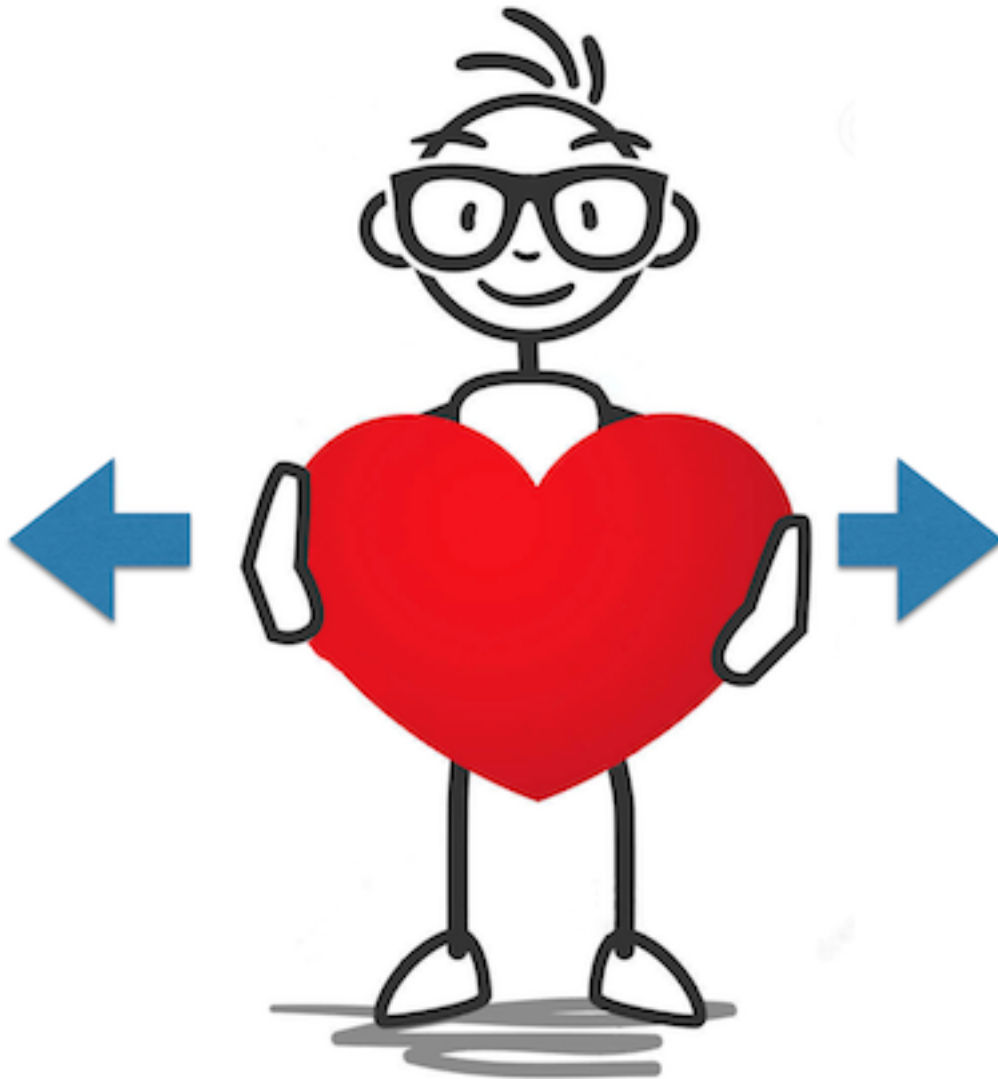
– DAY 69 –

Heart Motivations

This section of the school is all about Eternal Love, but we need to start by looking at the area of heart motivations.

Jesus said:

A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. **Luke 6:45 (NIV)**



Jesus was essentially saying, "What is in our heart will show up in our life." There can be many motivations in our heart that determine the kind of life that flows out from us. I like to divide heart motivations into four basic types:

FEAR OBLIGATION REWARD LOVE

These heart motivations can be summarised by the following statements:

Fear - "I'm afraid of what will happen to me."

Obligation - "I owe you."

Reward - "What is in it for me?"

Love - "I'll give you my best because you are worth it."



Obviously, it is really important to look at our heart motivations to determine the place we are living from. However, here is another question you may not have thought so much about:

What is the motivation of the heart of God towards us?

Even though the answer to this question may seem obvious, I would like to look at each of these four heart motivations in relation to God's heart. By doing this, we can learn how Father God does not relate to us.

But first, we need to remind ourselves of God's essential nature.

God is love **1 John 4:16 (NIV)**

God doesn't just love; He is love. Love is His very nature. Love is at the core of His being.

Father God loves because He is love.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Can you relate to these heart motivations? Are there any other heart motivations that you can think of? How have these applied to you? How do they compare with the motivation of love? Write about this in your journal.

Fear

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18 (NIV)

We know that God is love. The apostle John tells us that there can be no fear in love. Therefore, there can be no fear in God's heart. Think about these statements:

- God is not afraid of being rejected or misunderstood.
- God is not afraid of sin, evil or people's failures.
- God never uses fear as a means to relate to people.

God is secure in who He is. He is not afraid to relate to people no matter the state of their life. Sin does have consequences in our life, but sin does not stop Father God loving us and wanting an intimate relationship with us. He is not afraid of sin.



Fear is one of the primary tools used in the world to control people. Fear of punishment can also be a powerful motivation. Before becoming a Christian, I lived a reasonably moral life by the standards of my culture. Looking back now, I realise that the main reason I didn't "sin" was because of a fear of punishment. As Christians,

fear of punishment is never the place Father God has for His sons and daughters to live.

We can use fear to bring about certain good behaviours or to try and stop negative living in others, but this is never a reflection of the heart of the Father. Father God always relates to us with love and hope in His heart, even when we fail or sin. Fear is a characteristic of the demonic realm and never of the Kingdom of God.

Obligation

*“Who has ever given to God, that God should repay them?” For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. **Romans 11:35-36 (NIV)***

Within the Eternal Trinity, there is complete sufficiency and freedom. They do not need anyone else. God was never obliged to create and to love. However, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit chose to create and give their love to the created ones. They freely chose to have a relationship with us. There is no motivation of obligation in the heart of God. Father God does not love because He has to but because He chooses to.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Can you think of examples in your life where you have been motivated by fear or obligation? How did this work out for you? Write about this in your journal.

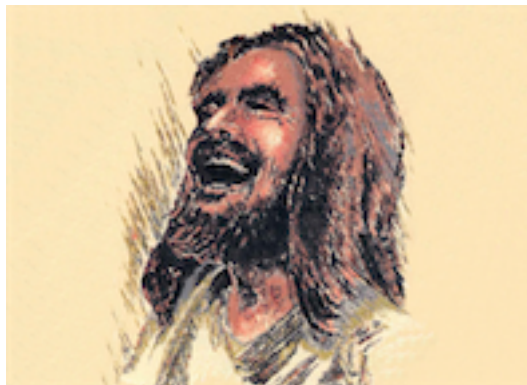
Reward

*... fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **Hebrews 12:2 (NIV)***

This Scripture indicates that there was some motivation of reward in Jesus' heart in dying for us. Jesus was motivated by the joy that was before Him.

What brought about this joy?

I believe that Jesus' joy was his own as He anticipated people being redeemed, but there was a greater joy that came from seeing His Father's heart desire fulfilled.



Jesus took the most pleasure from pleasing His Father. Jesus' joy was a joy that came from His Father's pleasure that His lost children would be coming home. The created ones would now be able to receive the Father's love. Jesus' true reward was based on His love relationship with His Father.

Love

In God's heart, love is always the supreme motivation. Love is who He is. Love is the very heartbeat of God. Everything the Father does is motivated by His own love.



With this foundation in place, I want to ask you a fundamental question.

When did God start loving us? When did He start loving me?



To answer this question, we need to take a journey back through time and beyond.

So, put on your seatbelt and come for the ride of your life.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend a few moments meditating on the truth that God is love and that He is always motivated by his own love. What does this mean for you and your relationship with Him? Write in your journal.

– DAY 72 –

Today

This journey starts with today. Let me ask you:

Are you a Christian? Are you God's son or daughter?

If you answered "yes," it is wonderful to have you as a part of the family of God.



*Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God's Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we've embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God. **1 John 4:15-16 (The Message)***

This passage shows us clearly that God is loving us in our relationship with Him. This reality is our experience right now. He knows us, and we know Him. So we can say that God is loving us today, right now, but we know that He did not start loving us today.



Salvation

Can you remember when you got saved?

Maybe you grew up in a loving Christian family and came to know Jesus at a young age and so can't remember the exact day of your salvation. For me, I grew up without hearing the gospel and became an atheist, believing in science and evolution. At the age of 18, I began to have a sense deep within me that I was not an accident as evolution said I was. This understanding was the beginning of my journey to accepting Jesus, coming into God's family and experiencing the Father's love.



Did God start loving us on that day in that amazing moment we accepted Jesus?

No, He didn't start loving us only when we accepted Him.

*But think about this: while we were wasting our lives in sin, God revealed His powerful love to us in a tangible display – Jesus died for us. **Romans 5:8 (The Voice)***

God was already loving us before we even believed in Him. He loved me even when I rejected His very existence. He loved us while we were still sinners. The Father's love was revealed or manifested by Jesus dying for us, but did not begin there. We were loved even before we loved God in return. This truth gives an insight into the depth of love in the heart of God for us.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

*How does it make you feel that you were loved even before you accepted Jesus?
What does this say about the nature of the Father? Write in your journal.*

– DAY 73 –

Birth

Do you remember the day you were born? Of course, you don't, but for our parents, that day was an unforgettable and fantastic day when they could hold us in their arms. But ...



Did God start loving us on the day we were born into this world?

Here are a couple of scriptures to help answer this question.

God said to the prophet Jeremiah

"Before I even formed you in your mother's womb, I knew all about you. Before you drew your first breath, I had already chosen you ..." **Jeremiah 1:5 (The Voice)**

And King David says in Psalm 139

*For you shaped me, inside and out ... you knitted me together in my mother's womb long before I took my first breath ... I am your unique creation, filled with wonder and awe ... you have approached even the smallest details with excellence; your works are wonderful; you see all things; nothing about me was hidden from you as I took shape in secret, carefully crafted in the heart of the earth before I was born from its womb. **Psalm 139: 13-17 (The Voice)***

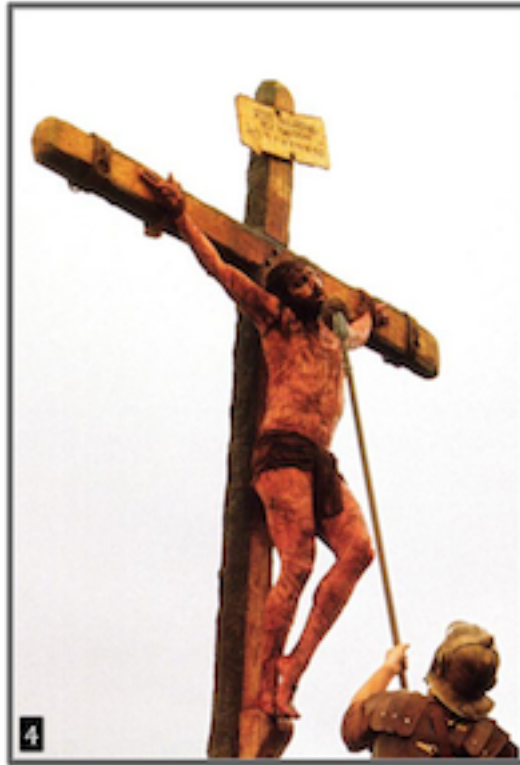
We can see from the way that God related to Jeremiah and David that God was loving us even before we were born into this world. He was intimately involved in our design and creation. God already knew all about us and had already chosen us before we appeared in this world. Such wonderful truth!



The Cross

What would you say was the most significant act of love in history?

Jesus' dying on the cross for all mankind, right?



This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about--not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God **1 John 4:9-10 (The Message)**

There is no greater way to love than to give your life for your friends **John 15:13 (The Voice)**

Jesus dying on the cross was an incredible act of love that opened the way for us to have a relationship with God. But,

Did God's love for us start there on the cross?

No, as incredible as Jesus' act of sacrifice and love was, God's love for us was revealed at the cross, but did not begin there. We need to go back even further.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

How does the fact that Father God loved you before you were born make you feel? Write in your journal. Read Psalm 139 and spend some time meditating on this

Creation

At the beginning of time, God revealed His glory and made a perfect and amazing world. On the sixth day of creation, the most amazing thing happened.

*One day the Eternal God scooped dirt out of the ground, sculpted it into the shape we call human, breathed the breath that gives life into the nostrils of the human, and the human became a living soul. **Genesis 2:7 (The Voice)***



I had always imagined that when Adam first opened his eyes that he looked around and said to himself, “Where am I?” Or that he looked at himself and said, “Who am I?” But, this was not the case. I love the picture that James Jordan paints when sharing about this incredible event of the creation of Adam. To understand this revelation, you will need to picture this moment using your imagination.

Where did God breathe life into the first man?

His nostrils

So, who did Adam first see when he opened his eyes? *His Father.*

Adam's first experience in life was seeing the face of his Father. As he gazed into the eyes of perfect love, the Father's love poured into Adam and established sonship and identity. Adam was born into love. James Jordan says that this was like a waterfall of love pouring from the Father into His son.



So, was it at creation when God loved Adam, saw Adam's descendants to come, that He anticipated a relationship with us and started loving us?

No, we need to go back further (way further). In fact, we need to go outside time and into eternity.

Eternal Family

At this point, we need to establish another important truth before we continue on our journey.

When did family start?



*The Father loves the Son and withholds nothing from Him. **John 3:35 (The Voice)***

This verse, along with many others, shows us that there has always been a perfect love relationship in the Godhead - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are the eternal family. They are where family started. They have always demonstrated perfect love to each other and experienced perfect love from each other.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Imagine yourself in Adam's place at creation. How would you feel the first time you saw the face of your Father and experienced His love? How would you live if this was your daily experience? Write about this in your journal.

How About Us?

God chose us to be in a relationship with Him even before He laid out plans for this world. Long, long ago (before the world was made) He decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son

Ephesians 1:4-6 (The Message)

This is an incredible passage of Scripture. God chose us to have a relationship with Him. You could say we were chosen in love. Father God has invited us into His Eternal Family. We are the recipients of divine love – a love that began before time.

This is Eternal Love.

As I have considered this Eternal Love revealed in the Scriptures, in what Jesus has done for us and in my own experience of the love of Father God, I have come to the following conclusions about the eternal love of the Father.

- This love was freely initiated in the heart of the Father.
- This love was given before any response from us was possible.
- This love was absolutely risky as it may not be returned.
- This love was completely unconditional.
- This love placed an eternal value on us beyond compare.



So, let's go back to the question I asked you at the beginning of this journey.

When did God start loving me?

HE HAS ALWAYS LOVED ME!

I AM FOREVER CHOSEN and FOREVER LOVED.

Creation, the Cross, our birth, salvation and the Christian life all have one ultimate purpose.

To bring us into the reality of this eternal love and into an experience of the relationship Father God planned to have with us all along.

chosen

The only questions that remain are:

- **Will you receive this eternal love?**
- **Will you live fully in the relationship that Father God desires for you as His beloved child?**

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Spend some time meditating on Ephesians 1:4-6. How does the truth of Father God's eternal love for you change the way you think He wants to relate to you? Write about this in your journal.

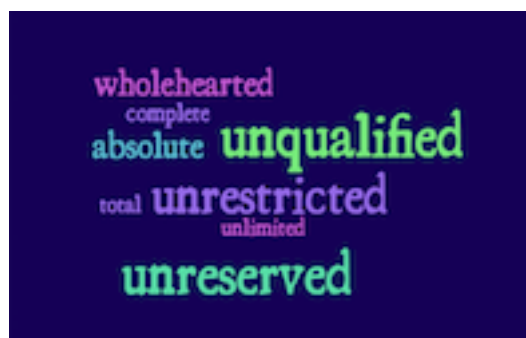
Unconditional Love

You have probably heard the words, unconditional love, before, but what do they really mean?

What is the unconditional love of Father God?

Here are some other words which can be used within the meaning of unconditional.

- Wholehearted
- Complete
- Absolute
- Unqualified
- Total
- Unrestricted
- Unlimited
- Unreserved



The following phrases use these words in the context of God's unconditional love for me as His child. As you read, let the truth of how loved you are soak into your inner being.

- I am loved with a **wholehearted** love. God's whole heart is loving me.
- His love is **complete** and lacks nothing.
- His love for me is absolutely, **absolute**. I never need to doubt this.
- His love is **unqualified**. It is not dependant on qualifications, performance or behaviour.
- I am **totally** loved. God loves all of me with all of Himself.
- There is **no restriction** on God's love for me.
- He does not **limit** His love for me in any way.
- God's love for me is **unreserved**. Nothing is being held back.

Eternal Love

Father God's heart has always been to connect His heart to yours in an amazing love relationship. This was His eternal plan, and He is fully committed to seeing this come to pass in your life.



Jesus said:

"I've loved you the way my father has loved me. Make yourselves at home in my love **John 15:9 (The Message)**

Are you at home in Father God's love?

Are you ready to come home today?



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What does the unconditional love of Father God mean to you? In the past, have you placed conditions on how you thought that the Father wanted to love you ? How will things be different now? Write in your journal.

Prayer

"Father God, I thank you that the supreme motivation in your heart towards me is always loving. You are love. Help me to understand this and receive who you truly are. Help me to relate to you as my loving Father."

I ask that you forgive me for using fear, obligation or even reward as a way to relate to people and to receive what I need from them. Only when I love and give my best to someone because they are worth it, do I look like you as my Father."

"Father God, I thank you that I can also relate to you in love. Love is always a higher motivation than fear, obligation or reward. I choose to give my best to you because you are worth it."

"Father God, thank you for everything you have done in my life to bring me to this point. Thank you for creating me and bringing me into this world. You knew me even before I was born. You loved me before I even knew you or acknowledged you. Thank you for the Cross and the incredible love revealed in this act. Thank you for creating Adam as a son in love. You want me to have this same kind of relationship with you."

"Father God, thank you for welcoming me into your Eternal Family and for opening your heart to me. Thank you that you planned before creation to have a relationship with me and that you are 100% committed to me experiencing this love relationship."

"Thank you for unconditional love. Your love for me is wholehearted, complete, absolute, unqualified, total, unrestricted, unlimited and unreserved."

"Father God, right now and just as I am, I choose to come home to you and to live in this place of eternal, unconditional love. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend some time soaking in the eternal, unconditional love of the Father. Afterwards, write in your journal what you have experienced.

Section Activity

The activity for this section is very simple. You are invited to receive the eternal love of the Father in a fresh way into your heart. Here is what I would like you to do.

Find a quiet place where you will not be distracted.

Please close your eyes and focus your heart's gaze on your Heavenly Father.

Imagine the love of Father God flowing down upon you like a waterfall. Let His love soak into you and refresh you.

Stop striving and let every burden go. Just receive your Father's love. See His eyes of love gazing upon you.

Rest in this place of love. Stay here for a while.

Let the revelation of eternal, unconditional love freshly captivate your heart.

Write down in your journal what He shows you during this time.

Review Questions

1. What were the four main heart motivations?
2. Why does Father God love us?
3. What was the true source of Jesus' joy that enabled him to go to the cross?
4. When did family start?
5. When did Father God start loving us?
6. What was Father God's ultimate purpose?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. Fear, obligation, reward, and love.
2. He loves because He is love. Love is His essential nature.
3. Jesus' fullest joy was knowing His Father's joy and pleasure as lost children would be coming home.
4. Father, Son and Holy Spirit have always been family. They are the original, eternal family.
5. He has always loved us. This is Eternal Love.
6. To bring us into the reality of His eternal love and into an experience of the relationship that He has planned for us.

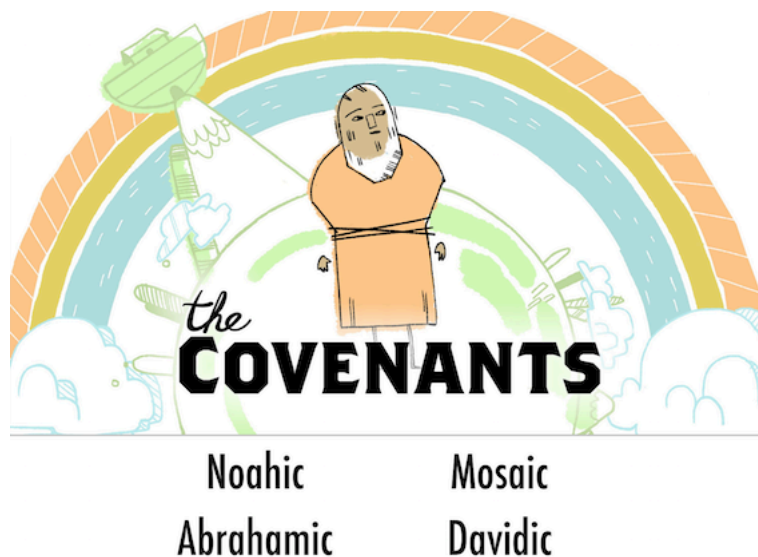
Write a short message about the Eternal Love of Father God that you could share with someone. Share the message when you have an opportunity.

8. FATHER-SON RELATIONSHIP

– DAY 80 –

The New Covenant

In this next section of the school, we will start by looking at the New Covenant as a basis for understanding how Father God relates to us as His children.



If you study the covenants in the Bible before the New Covenant – the Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic covenants, you will discover that these covenants were directly between God and man. God was on one side of the covenant and man was on the other.

G O D



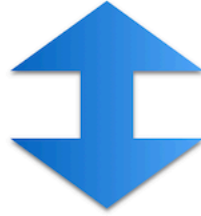
MAN

The New Covenant is very different to these previous covenants in one major way that changes everything. The New Covenant is not actually between God and man, but between God the Father and Jesus the Son.

... God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. **2 Corinthians 5:19 (NIV)**

Here we see God is now on both sides of the covenant representing Himself and representing people in Christ. Father God invites us into this New Covenant by faith in Jesus Christ. We get to participate in the New Covenant and receive all its benefits that we could never achieve standing before God on our own. The book of Hebrews states that this New Covenant is in every way a Better Covenant than the previous covenants.

GOD THE FATHER



JESUS THE SON

So, the questions that we need to ask are:

How do I get to live in this New Covenant?

What happens to me?

In Christ

The first scripture verse that I ever memorised was 2 Corinthians 5:17. Can you quote it from memory?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)**

We come into the New Covenant through the way of salvation found only in Jesus Christ. This scripture we have just read says when we are “in Christ” we are a new creation. We receive a completely new nature. Ephesians 3:20 says that we now have access to the resurrection power of God to live fully in this new nature.



*But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. **1 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV)***

When we are “in Christ” we have a oneness or union with God. We know that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son. He has always been the Son, just like Father God has always been the Father. When we come into Jesus the Son we become a son (or a daughter) of His Father. Jesus' Father becomes our Father.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

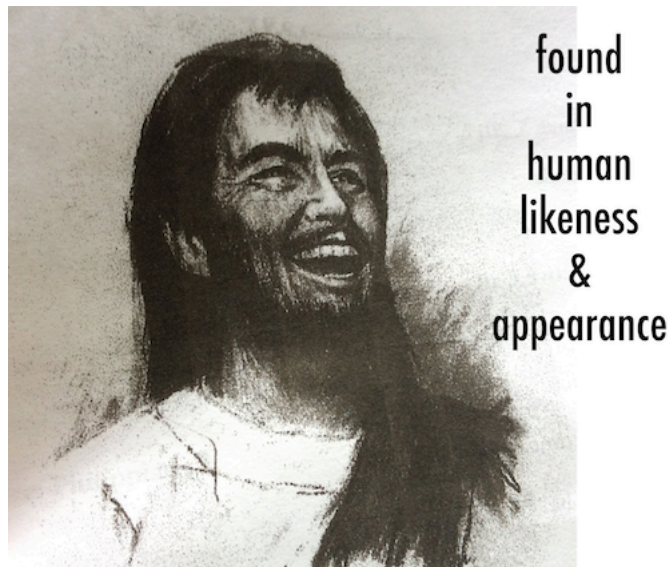
*What does it mean to be “in Christ”? How does this change everything for you?
Write in your journal.*

Jesus the Man

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death –even death on a cross!

Philippians 2:6-8 (NIV)

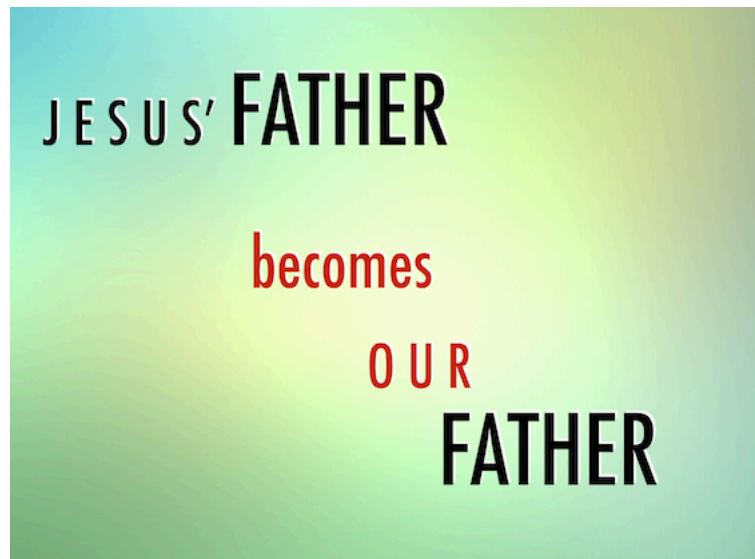
Jesus came from heaven to earth as the eternal Son of God and became a man. He became flesh and blood like us.



Why did Jesus become a man?

Firstly as we have already seen, Jesus came to represent us before His Father so that we could be saved, forgiven and welcomed into the New Covenant relationship. This is awesome news! But, I believe there is another hugely important reason Jesus came as a man. Jesus' ultimate goal was for His Father to become our Father. Jesus

lived as a man to model for us what is possible for us as sons and daughters of the Father. He lived to show us how to relate to God as our Father.



Jesus the Son

John 14:6 is another very familiar verse that you may be able to quote from the heart.

*Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **John 14:6 (NIV)***

J E S U S

is the

WAY

If Jesus is the way, we need to ask the question:

Jesus is the way to where?

The answer is obvious, but is actually “who” rather than “where.” Jesus is the way to the Father. So, we can say that Jesus is the way and that the Father is the destination. Jesus came to bring us to His Father. Jesus came so that we could have a relationship with His Father as sons and daughters.

THE FATHER

is the

DESTINATION

Stephen Hill in his book "John: A Prophetic Revelation" says:

"we have not had a sufficient revelation that we are united with Jesus in His sonship to the Father. When the truth is revealed to us that Jesus' core identity is in His sonship to the Father, we can begin to travel along 'the Way' towards 'the Destination.'"

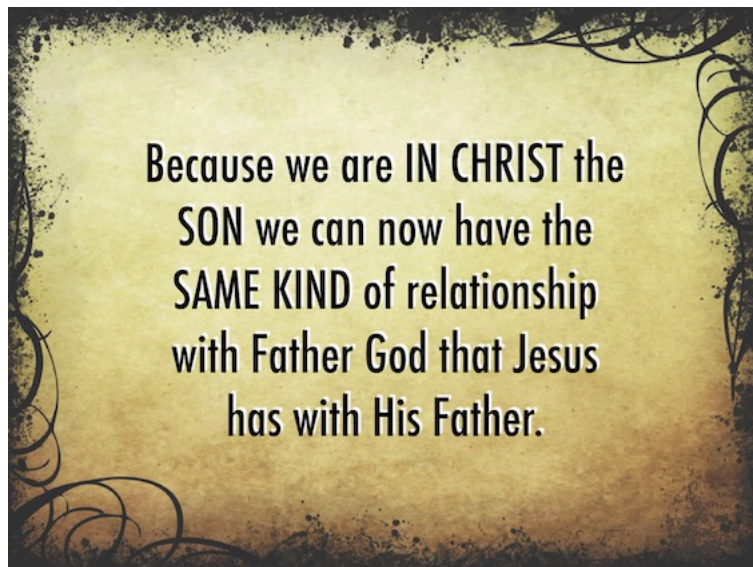
– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Why did Jesus come to earth as a man? As a son? Write your answers in your journal and thank Him for making a way open to having a relationship with the Father.

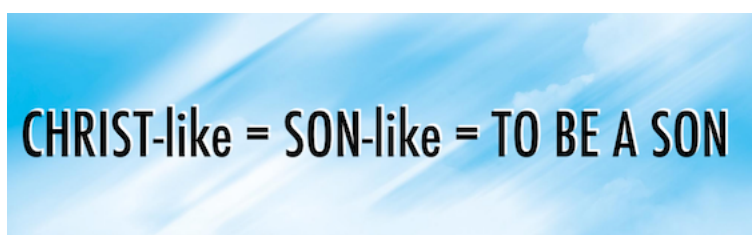
The Same Kind of Relationship

When we come into Jesus the Son we also become sons because Jesus is the Son. Sons of whom? Sons of God the Father. This next statement is extremely important.

Because we are “in Christ” the Son we can now have the same kind of relationship with Father God that Jesus has with His Father.



This is mind-blowing! I need to say it again. We can have the same kind of relationship with Father God that Jesus has with His Father. I believe this is what it really means to become Christ-like. To be Christ-like is to be son-like – or, simply put, to be a son.



In our new creation nature, we are able to live in the fullness of a relationship with the Father as His son or daughter. When we truly receive this revelation, we can begin to see what is possible for us in our relationship with the Father. While Jesus was on earth He related to His Father in a way that we now can as well. The Father relates to us just as He did with His Son Jesus.



So, we should really be asking.

What is available to me as a son or daughter in my relationship with Father God? What am I not yet experiencing that I could be?

Relationship

An unchanging principle both in the natural and spiritual realms is that life flows through relationships. Father God is the source of all life. His life now flows to us through our relationship with Him.



*And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. **Luke 2:52 (NIV).***

While Jesus was on earth as a man He was growing in His relationship with His Father. This relationship wasn't static or stagnant. It was growing, active and life-giving. Jesus' source of life was His Father. This was the life that flowed out from Jesus.



In the New Covenant, we are invited into the Father-Son relationship with all its benefits, but we still need to develop our own Father-son, Father-daughter relationship in order to receive an ongoing flow of life. We can't just live in the

concept or idea of a relationship. Our relationship with Father God must be personal, active and growing in order for it to be life-giving to us and through us.

Is this the kind of relationship that you desire to grow in with your Father?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What does it mean to you that it is possible to have the same kind of relationship with Father God that Jesus does? How will this look in your life? Ask the Father about this and write what He says in your journal.

The Gospel of John

What is your favourite gospel?

Based on my experience of asking this question, your answer would most likely be the Gospel of John. It is without a doubt the same for me. In this gospel there is a depth of revelation into each member of the Godhead-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - that is a deep, deep well. It is also a window into the relationship between Jesus the Son and His Father. John's gospel gives us insight into:

- The way the man Jesus related to His Father as a son.
- The amazing way Jesus the Son revealed, expressed and represented His Father.

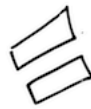
Two Ways

As we read and meditate on the Gospel of John there are two positions or postures our heart and mind can take:

1. A "study" or "theological" type approach. Trying to gain an understanding of the nature of God and place this in a framework of knowledge or information.
2. A 'heart-wide-open' approach like a little child seeking to receive revelation about what is now available for us to grow into our relationship with the Father.

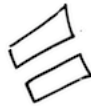
The study approach has much value, but the “heart-wide-open, little child” approach will allow revelation to be deposited in our hearts that will bring transformation in our relationship with the Father. I encourage you to take a “heart-wide-open” approach in the activity that follows.

LIVING in the
CONCEPT or
IDEA of a
relationship with
GOD.



NO
LIFE

LIVING in a
PERSONAL, ACTIVE
and **GROWING**
relationship with
FATHER GOD.



REAL
LIFE

We are going to read some amazing passages where Jesus interacts with His Father, and I would like you to ask yourself these questions:

What does this mean for me as a son or daughter of the Father?

What is available to me that I can grow into in my relationship with Father God?

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Do you have a favourite passage in the Gospel of John? If so, read this passage of Scripture now and receive fresh revelation about the Father-Son relationship. Write in your journal what is revealed to you.

Section Activity

The activity for this section will help you to receive revelation personally and to grow in your relationship with your Heavenly Father. I want to encourage you to open your heart afresh to His love. Listen for the voice of the Father speaking to you personally.

First, read the scripture verse and then make the declaration over yourself. After this, pause for a few moments to allow the revelation to sink into your heart. Come back later to the revelation that spoke to you the most and talk with your Father about it some more.

The Father Revealed

John 1:14 (The Passion)

And so, Jesus the Living Expression became a man and lived among us! And we gazed upon the splendour of his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father overflowing with tender mercy and truth!

Jesus came from the Father to reveal the Father to me. So that His Father could become my Father.

Luke 10:22 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

“Father, you have entrusted me with all that you are and all that you have. No one fully knows the Son except the Father. And no one fully knows the Father except the Son. But the Son can introduce and reveal the Father to anyone he chooses.”

Jesus has chosen to introduce and reveal His Father to me.

John 10:15 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"... just as my Father knows my heart and I know my Father's heart. I am ready to give my life for the sheep."

Jesus fully knows His Father's heart. In Christ, I can also know my Father's heart.

John 16:15 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"Everything that belongs to the Father belongs to me—that's why I say that the Divine Encourager will receive what is mine and reveal it to you."

Our Father, the Divine Encourager is releasing revelation into my heart today.

John 20:17 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"Mary, don't hold on to me now, for I haven't yet ascended to God, my Father. And he's not only my Father and God, but now he's your Father and your God! Now go to my brothers and tell them what I've told you, that 'I am ascending to my Father—and your Father, to my God—and your God!'"

Jesus' Father has become my Father.

Relationship with the Father

John 6:45-46 (The Message)

Jesus speaking

"This is what the prophets meant when they wrote, 'And then they will all be personally taught by God.' Anyone who has spent any time at all listening to the Father, really listening and therefore learning, comes to me to be taught personally—to see it with his own eyes, hear it with his own ears, from me, since I have it first-hand

from the Father. No one has seen the Father except the One who has his Being alongside the Father—and you can see me.”

Jesus can reveal the Father to me because He has always been in an intimate relationship with His Father. Now I can have this same kind of relationship with my Father.

John 14:18 &20 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

“I promise that I will never leave you helpless or abandon you as orphans—I will come back to you! ... when that day comes, you will know that I am living in the Father and that you are one with me, for I will be living in you.”

Jesus is always living in the Father so that I can also live in the Father. I am no longer like an orphan in this world. My Father is with me.

John 16:23 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

“For here is eternal truth: When that time comes you won’t need to ask me for anything, but instead, you will go directly to the Father and ask him for anything you desire, and he will give it to you, because of your relationship with me.”

As a son or daughter who is in Christ I have a direct relationship with the Father that opens a conduit for everything I need.

Loved by the Father

Luke 3:21-22 (The Message)

... and the Holy Spirit, like a dove descending, came down on Jesus. And along with the Spirit, a voice: “You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life.”

As a Son and as a man, Jesus lived under the constant gaze of the pleasure of His Father. As His son or daughter, I live under this same gaze of my Father's pleasure.

John 6:27 (NIV)

Jesus speaking

"... For on the Son of Man God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

The Father has placed His seal of approval on Jesus. As I am now in the Son, The Father has also placed His seal of approval on me.

John 8:54 (The Voice)

Jesus speaking

"If I were trying to make Myself somebody important, it would be a waste of time. That kind of fame is worth nothing. It is the Father who is behind Me, urging Me on, giving Me praise ..."

As a Son, the praise of His Father was everything to Jesus. The Father reveals who I am as His son or daughter. Then I can freely hear His praise for me.

The Pleasure of my Father

John 5:19 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"I speak to you timeless truth. I never act independently of the Father or do anything through my own initiative. I only do the works that I see the Father doing, for the Son does the same works as his Father."

Sons and daughters do the same works as their Father. In Christ, I can live in this same kind of relationship.

John 5:20 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"Because the Father loves his Son so much, he always reveals to me everything that he is about to do. And you will all be amazed when he shows me even greater works than what you've seen so far!"

The Father revealed all that He was doing to His Son. I can live with this same flow of revelation of what the Father is doing in and around me.

John 8:15 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"For I discern the truth. And I am not alone in my judgments, for my Father and I have the same understanding in all things, and he has sent me to you."

Jesus and the Father have the same understanding - they share the same heart. This is the heart that is being formed in me.

John 12:49 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"For I'm not speaking as someone who is self-appointed, but I speak by the authority of the Father himself who sent me, and who instructed me what to say."

True authority comes from the Father to His Son and through Jesus to me because I am in the Son.

John 14:13 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"For I will do whatever you ask me to do when you ask me in my name. And that is how the Son will show what the Father is like and bring glory to him."

Jesus shows me what the Father is really like. The more I become like Jesus, the more I will look like my Father.

John 17:8 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"And the very words you gave to me to speak, I have passed on to them. They have received your words and carry them in their hearts. They are convinced that I

have come from your presence, and they have fully believed that you sent me to represent you."

Jesus was sent to represent the Father. In Christ, I have also been sent to represent the Father.

We Reveal the Father

John 1:18 (The Passion)

No one has ever gazed upon the fullness of God's splendour, except the uniquely beloved Son, who is cherished by the Father and held close to his heart. Now he leads the way to the place of honour at the Father's side!

Jesus is the uniquely beloved and cherished Son, close to the heart of the Father. He came to lead me into this same place of love and honour.

John 3:35 (The Message)

Jesus speaking

"The Father loves the Son extravagantly. He turned everything over to him so he could give it away—a lavish distribution of gifts."

Jesus is lavishing the love of His Father on me today.

John 6:37 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"But everyone my Father has given to me, they will come. And all who come to me, I will embrace and will never turn them away."

I have come to Jesus, and the Father is embracing me in love and will never turn me away.

John 6:44 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"The only way people come to me is by the Father who sent me—he pulls on their hearts to embrace me. "

It was the Father that was pulling on my heart to embrace Jesus so that the Father could embrace me.

John 14:23 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"Loving me empowers you to obey my word. And my Father will love you so deeply that we will come to you and make you our dwelling place."

The eternal love of the Father is dwelling within me so that I can always know that I am deeply loved.

John 15:9 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"I love each of you with the same love that the Father loves me. Let my love nourish your hearts."

I am nourished today with the love of the Father flowing into my heart in Christ.

John 17:26 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"I have revealed to them who you are and I will continue to make you even more real to them, so that they may experience the same endless love that you have for me, for your love will now live in them, Even as I live in them!"

Jesus is making the Father more and more real to me so that I can experience the same endless love that the Father has for Jesus.

Life, Unity & Authority

John 5:26 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"For the Father has given the Son the power to impart life, even as the Father imparts life."

In Christ, I have been given the power to impart the life of my Father.

John 6:32 (The Message)

Jesus speaking

"The real significance of that Scripture is not that Moses gave you bread from heaven but that my Father is right now offering you bread from heaven, the real bread."

The life of the Father is real bread from heaven. I have a life-giving relationship with Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

John 6:57 (The Message)

Jesus speaking

"In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here, and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me."

The source of Jesus life is His Father. This life that flows to me from Jesus is the life of the Father. This life is flowing to me right now and every moment of every day.

John 10:30 (The Message)

Jesus speaking

"I and the Father are one heart and mind."

This is perfect unity and oneness - Father and Son. I can live in this same oneness and unity in my relationship with them.

John 17:22 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"For the very glory, you have given to me, I have given them, so that they will be joined together as one and experience the same unity that we enjoy."

Only by experiencing the unity between the Father and the Son can I experience unity in the family of God.

John 17:24 (The Passion)

Jesus speaking

"Father, I ask that you allow everyone that you have given to me, to reign at our side, for I want them to be where I am!"

I belong to Christ and therefore I reign with Him at the Father's side forever.

Prayer

Would you allow me to pray for you today?

"Father God, thank you that my brothers and sisters are in the New Covenant in Christ. You are now on both sides of the covenant making a relationship with you possible that they could never achieve on their own. They are now a new creation and have a new nature."

"When they came into Jesus, the Son, they became your son or daughter. Father, I thank you that my brother or sister can now have the same kind of relationship with you that Jesus had with you while on earth. Please show them how to live in this relationship with you as their Father."

"I pray that they would receive the revelation that they are united with Jesus in His sonship to the Father. May sonship become more and more their core identity. Thank you, Father, that you now relate to them the same way you do to your Son Jesus."

"Father, I ask that you would grant your children a personal, active and growing relationship with you as the source. Show them what is available for them in their relationship with you. May this become their daily experience."

"Help them to continue to receive heart revelation of who you are as their Father and who they are as your sons and daughters. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Choose the Scripture from the section activity that spoke to you the most and spend some time meditating on this. Write your reflections in your journal.

Review Questions

1. What is the main difference between the New Covenant and the previous covenants in the Bible?
2. When we are placed into Christ who do we become?
3. Why did Jesus the Son become a man?
4. Ultimately, why did Jesus (the Way) come to earth?
5. What kind of relationship does the Father want us to experience?
6. What was Jesus' relationship with His Father like while He was on earth?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. In the New Covenant, God is on both sides of the covenant representing Himself and representing people who are in Christ. The previous covenants were directly between God and man.
2. We become a son or a daughter of God because God has placed us in the Son. Jesus' Father becomes our Father.
3. So that we could be saved, but also to show us how to live as sons and daughters of the Father.
4. Jesus came to bring us to His Father. Jesus came so that we could have a relationship with His Father as sons and daughters.
5. The same kind of relationship that Jesus has with His Father.

6. Jesus' relationship with His Father was His source of life. This relationship was growing and active.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Which truths stood out to you the most from this section? How does this change your relationship with Father God as a son or daughter?

9. THE NATURE OF SONSHIP

– DAY 87 –

Sons and Daughters

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." **2 Corinthians 6:18 (NIV)**

This verse states plainly Father God's desire and intention to have sons and daughters.

This section of the school will help us to understand more fully who we are as sons and daughters of Father God. We all need to know more about the nature of our sonship.

The Identity of Sons

One of the most important questions we can ask is, "Who am I?" Another way to put this is, "What is my identity?" Understanding our true identity is very important. Our identity is who we are and is with us wherever we go. The way that we see ourselves will determine the way we will live our life. As Christians, we need to learn to live in our true identity as sons and daughters of our Heavenly Father.

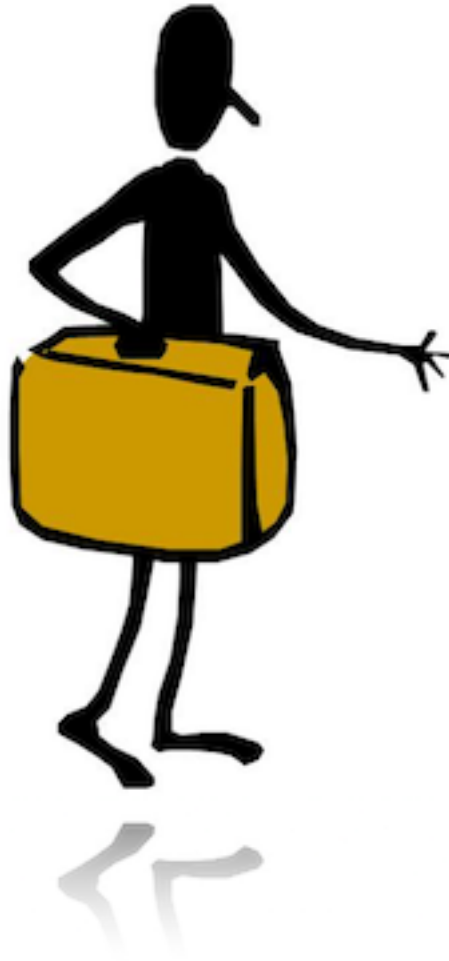


There has been a popular saying over the last few years among Christians - "What would Jesus do?" This is a good question to ask, and we can learn a lot from how Jesus lived on earth as He related with people. However, I sense that Father God is saying to us. "You are my children, and you look like me. You can represent me well in all you say and do." So, the real question becomes, "As a son or daughter, who will you be?" Remember, the doing part should always follow being.

Sons and daughters find their identity in their relationship with their earthly fathers and mothers. When we become "born again" believers in Christ we find our true identity in our relationship with Father God. So, our identity becomes a journey of discovering who my Heavenly Father says I am.

So, what would you say to this question now?

"Who am I?"



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Write in your journal your answer to the question, “Who am I?” Try not to focus on the positions or roles you have in life, but think about who you are when no one else is watching you.

The Royalty of Sons

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV)

What does this scripture say about royalty?

We are a royal priesthood. We are royalty

God our Father, is the King of the universe. There is no end to His kingdom, reign, and dominion. He always has and always will be the King. We know that Father God calls us His sons and daughters. Therefore we are royal sons and daughters.



Imagine if you were a prince or princess of an earthly king or queen. What kind of power and authority would you have? How would you be treated in the kingdom? How would you see yourself?

Well, you are a royal son or daughter of the King of all kings!

Royal sons & daughters receive the following:

- Access (to the presence of the King)
- Authority (in the realm of the Kingdom)

- Intimacy (with the King)
- Identity (a royal name)

How does this truth make you feel?

Heirs

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs –heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:15-17 (NIV)

As children of God, we have become His heirs. We now have a royal inheritance. As a child of God, we have access to all the resources of heaven and earth that our Father created and owns. There never needs to be lack among God's children.



Having access to this kind of inheritance has a practical application in the family of God. We don't need to compete with each other or strive for the love, blessing, and favour of our Heavenly Father. He loves all His children the same and has more than enough to give for everything we need for ourselves and to use to build His Kingdom on earth. He may choose to give in different ways depending on our call, but there is always more than enough for all of His children.

Are you receiving your inheritance?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend some talking with the Father. Ask Him what it means for you to be royalty. How does He see you? How can you now see yourself? Write in your journal.

Authority

Royal sons and daughters know their position and authority in who they are.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Ephesians 1:22-23 (NIV)



This verse shows us that God placed all things under Jesus' feet. He has ultimate and complete authority. Now, we know that Jesus is the head of the church. Therefore, if Jesus is the head of the church and all things are under His feet, then this means that we, as the church, also have all things under our feet. Father God gives authority to His sons and daughters who are in Christ.

How do you plan to use the authority you have as a royal son or daughter?

The Revelation of Sons

At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little

children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.” **Matthew 11:25-26**
(NIV)

Who are the secrets of the kingdom revealed to?

To little children.



The things that God reveals are called revelation. Father God desires to uncover secrets of the Kingdom for His children to discover. Father God loves to give revelation to His children. Revelation from God is not just received in our mind, but also in our inner being - our heart of spirit. Revelation from God releases power and life to change and transform every part of us. We can only live as true sons and daughter from the place of revelation.

One of the most important revelations we can receive is that God is our loving Father and we are His beloved children.

Have you received this revelation deep in your heart?

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What are the main areas of revelation that you have received from the Lord? Write these out in your journal and spend some time thanking the Father for all that He has revealed to you so far. Ask Him what else He wants to reveal to you.

The Intimacy of Sons

*Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir. **Galatians 4:6-7 (NIV)***

What special words does the Holy Spirit speak into our hearts?

“Abba, Father.”

Only God’s children can speak the words – Abba Father – Daddy God. Abba was a Jewish term that best translates Daddy or Papa. Abba is a very intimate way to address Father God. Only children who are welcome in the Father’s embrace can address Him this way. He is close to us, and we are close to Him. We are like a small child in the intimate embrace of our Heavenly Father.



The Father's embrace is a place of love, security, peace, rest and comfort. As sons and daughters, we can experience this intimacy with our Father every day. In this place, we will be at home.

Is this the place you want to live?

What is stopping you?

The Leading of Sons

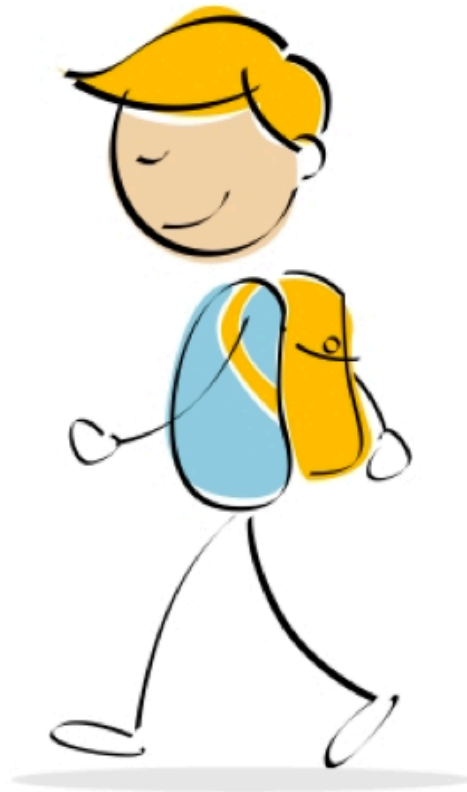
*For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. **Romans 8:14***
(NIV)

The privilege we have as children of God is that we can be led by the Spirit of God. Being led by the Spirit is also a defining characteristic of God's children. The question I would like to ask you is this:

How does the Spirit of God lead us?

I want you to imagine me leading you somewhere. Here are two ways I could lead you:

1. I could take you by the arm and pull you in the direction I want you to go. You don't have a choice. I am entirely in control. If you resist, I will either force you to do what I want you to do, or I will give up on you.
2. I could walk beside you encouraging you and leading you in the best direction. You are aware of my voice and my presence, but you are making the choice which way to go. If you fall down or go off in the wrong direction, I will help you to stand up again and keep moving forward.



Father God gives us the freedom to walk in sonship with Him. This kind of relationship looks a lot more like option two above. He wants us to grow in maturity as sons and daughters so that we hear His voice in relationship and exercise our own free will to respond to Him and to direct our lives in the best path for His glory.

Another way to look at this is to think of the difference between a plan and a purpose. There is only one way to fulfil a plan. If we miss a step or a direction, the plan will not come to pass. God might even find someone else to achieve this plan. You will have missed your opportunity.

However, there are many ways to fulfil a purpose or to get to a destination. We can miss the way and yet in God's love and mercy He will arrange many

opportunities for us to get on the right path again. We could fall or fail completely and then experience His wonderful love, forgiveness, and restoration that restores our confidence and gets us moving again. Father God desires us to experience an intimate relationship with Him as sons and daughters. The journey in relationship with Him is just as important as achieving the purpose. In fact, this is the real purpose.

PLAN OR PURPOSE?

Father God has an incredible purpose for all His children to be like Him and to share in His glory. As a good Father, He is fully committed to see us fulfil the life purpose He has destined us for. This is what it means to be led by the Spirit of God. There is no better way to live.

Do you desire to be led in freedom by the Spirit of God into the wonderful purpose and destiny the Father has for you as a son or daughter while experiencing Him all along the way?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How have you experienced God leading you in your life? Does this line up with what you have learned in this section on the leading of sons? What changes do you need to make in the way you expect God to lead you as a son or daughter. Write in your journal.

The Power of Sons

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God **John 1:12 (NIV)**

This word “right” is also translated as “power” or “authority.” As God’s children, we have access to His unlimited power, and the Father has given us the authority to bring heaven to earth (Matthew 28:18, 1 John 4:17). Perhaps the greatest power we have is the power to choose to be like our Father, to represent Him well.



Do you know that you have authority to represent Father God on earth? What are you doing with this authority?

The Acceptance of Sons

When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

Truly I tell you, anyone, who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” **Mark 10:14-15 (NIV)**

Jesus makes it quite clear that the only way to enter the Kingdom of God is like a little child. We know that children have lots of needs and are not perfect. In fact, as parents, we don't expect our children to be perfect before we love them and accept them. The goal is that children grow and become mature, but we will always accept them as our children.



How much more as a perfect father will Father God always accept us?

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” **Luke 11:11-13 (NIV)**

As parents, we want to give the best to our children because we love them.

Who does Father God give to His children?

The Holy Spirit

Father God gives us His very own Spirit - the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit. This reality shows that Father God is accepting us even when we are not perfect or are still a “work in progress.”



We need never doubt that our Heavenly Father always loves and accepts us, now and forever.

Do you know the complete acceptance of your Heavenly Father?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Do you believe that Father God completely accepts you? Spend some time talking to your Father about this. Write in your journal what acceptance will mean in your life in the future.

The Weakness of Sons

*But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. **2 Corinthians 12:9 (NIV)***

The apostle Paul was very open about the weaknesses in his own life. He didn’t try to hide them because he understood that it was in the areas of his weaknesses that God’s power was able to flow through His life. We can be encouraged by Paul’s testimony. It is normal for us to have weaknesses in our lives. We don’t need to be afraid of our weakness because God will use our weaknesses to reveal His power.



*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are –yet he did not sin. **Hebrews 4:15 (NIV)***

Jesus understands our weaknesses because He was also tempted in a physical body. As God’s children we live with the reality of weakness, but we also have a revelation and experience of the strength, power and transforming love of Father God in our lives.



Summary

Here is a quick summary of the nature of sonship.

Identity - Understanding who am I as a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.

Royalty - Receiving my inheritance and living in authority as a royal son or daughter of the King of the universe.

Revelation - Receiving into my heart the things which God reveals.

Intimacy - Being at home in intimate relationship with my Father.

Leading - Experiencing freedom in the journey into the Father's destiny and purpose for me.

Power - Receiving God's power and exercising His authority in me to bring heaven to earth.

Acceptance - Living in the full acceptance of my Father even when I am not perfect.

Weakness - Not being ashamed to allow my weaknesses to be opportunities for God to reveal His power in me.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

What would you say are the main areas of weakness in your life? Ask the Father how these can be used to reveal His power as you receive His grace. Write in your journal what He shows you.

Section Activity

1. Read the following Scriptures below one-by-one and think about how they apply to sonship for you.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who you are as a son or daughter of the Father.
3. Write down in your journal what He shows you.

(All these verses are from the Passion Translation)

*I be a true Father to you, and you will be my beloved sons and daughters,” says the Lord Yahweh Almighty. **2 Corinthians 6:18 (The Passion)***

*But you are God’s chosen treasure –priests who are kings, a spiritual “nation” set apart as God’s devoted ones. He called you out of darkness to experience his marvellous light, and now he claims you as his very own. He did this so that you would broadcast his glorious wonders throughout the world. For at one time you were not God’s people, but now you are. At one time you knew nothing of God’s mercy, because you hadn’t received it yet, but now you are drenched with it! **1 Peter 2:9-10 (The Passion)***

And you did not receive the “spirit of religious duty,” leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the “Spirit of full acceptance,” enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, “Beloved Father!” For the Holy Spirit makes God’s fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, “You are God’s beloved child!”

*And since we are his true children, we qualify to share all his treasures, for indeed, we are heirs of God himself. And since we are joined to Christ, we also inherit all that he is and all that he has. We will experience being co-glorified with him provided that we accept his sufferings as our own. **Romans 8:15-17 (The Passion)***

*Then Jesus exclaimed, "Father, thank you, for you are Lord, the Supreme Ruler over heaven and earth! And you have hidden the great revelation of your authority from those who are proud and wise in their own eyes. Instead, you have shared it with these who humble themselves. Yes, Father, your plan delights your heart, as you've chosen this way to extend your kingdom—by giving it to those who have become like trusting children. You have entrusted me with all that you are and all that you have. No one fully and intimately knows the Son except the Father. And no one fully and intimately knows the Father except the Son. But the Son is able to unveil the Father to anyone he chooses. **Matthew 11:25-27 (The Passion)***

Yet all of this was so that he would redeem and set free all those held hostage to the written law so that we would receive our freedom and a full legal adoption as his children.

And so that we would know for sure that we are his true children, God released the Spirit of Sonship into our hearts—moving us to cry out intimately, "My Father! You're our true Father!"

Now we're no longer living like slaves under the law, but we enjoy being God's very own sons and daughters! And because we're his, we can access everything our Father has—for we are heirs of God through Jesus, the Messiah!

*Before we knew God as our Father and we became his children, we were unwitting servants to the powers that be, which are nothing compared to God. But now that we truly know him and understand how deeply we're loved by him, why would we, even for a moment, consider turning back to those weak and feeble principles of religion, as though we were still subject to them? **Galatians 4:5-9 (The Passion)***

The mature children of God are those who are moved by the impulses of the Holy Spirit. And you did not receive the "spirit of religious duty," leading you back into the fear of never being good enough. But you have received the "Spirit of full acceptance," enfolding you into the family of God. And you will never feel orphaned, for as he rises up within us, our spirits join him in saying the words of tender affection, "Beloved Father!" For the Holy Spirit makes God's fatherhood real to us as he whispers into our innermost being, "You are God's beloved child!"

*And since we are his true children, we qualify to share all his treasures, for indeed, we are heirs of God himself. And since we are joined to Christ, we also inherit all that he is and all that he has. We will experience being co-glorified with him provided that we accept his sufferings as our own. **Romans 8:14-17 (NIV)***

*The entire universe is standing on tiptoe, yearning to see the unveiling of God's glorious sons and daughters! For against its will the universe itself has had to endure the empty futility resulting from the consequences of human sin. But now, with eager expectation, all creation longs for freedom from its slavery to decay and to experience with us the wonderful freedom coming to God's children. **Romans 8:19-21 (The Passion)***

*But those who embraced him and took hold of his name were given authority to become the children of God! **John 1:12 (The Passion)***

*When Jesus saw what was happening, he became indignant with his disciples and said to them, "Let all the little children come to me and never hinder them! Don't you know that God's kingdom realm exists for such as these? Listen to the truth I speak: Whoever does not open their arms to receive God's kingdom like a teachable child will never enter it." Then he embraced each child, and laying his hands on them, he lovingly blessed each one. **Mark 10:14-16 (The Passion)***

"Let me ask you this: Do you know of any father who would give his son a snake on a plate when he asked for a serving of fish? Of course not! Do you know of any father who would give his daughter a spider when she had asked for an egg? Of

course not! If imperfect parents know how to lovingly take care of their children and give them what they need, how much more will the perfect heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit's fullness when his children ask him." **Luke 11:11-13 (The Passion)**

And he chose us to be his very own, joining us to himself even before he laid the foundation of the universe! Because of his great love, he ordained us, so that we would be seen as holy in his eyes with an unstained innocence. For it was always in his perfect plan to adopt us as his delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that his tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify his grace—for the same love he has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us. And this unfolding plan brings him great pleasure! **Ephesians 1:4-6 (The Passion)**

And it's not just creation. We who have already experienced the firstfruits of the Spirit also inwardly groan as we passionately long to experience our full status as God's sons and daughters—including our physical bodies being transformed.

Romans 8:23 (The Passion)

For now he towers above all creation, for all things exist through him and for him. And that God made him, pioneer of our salvation, perfect through his sufferings, for this is how he brings many sons and daughters to share in his glory. Jesus, the Holy One, makes us holy. And as sons and daughters, we now belong to his same Father, so he is not ashamed or embarrassed to introduce us as his brothers and sisters!

Hebrews 2:10-11 (NIV)

Prayer

"Father God, thank you for choosing me as your child. You are my Father, and I am your son or daughter. Thank you for giving a revelation to my heart of who you are and who I am. In you, I find my true identity. I am no longer a slave, but a beloved son or daughter. Nothing will ever change this."

"You are the King of the Universe. I am part of your family. That makes me a royal son or daughter - a prince or a princess. Thank you for the inheritance you have given me. You give me access to all your resources, and I lack nothing. In you, there is always more than enough for all your children. All authority in heaven and earth belongs to you, and I receive the authority you give to me as a royal son or daughter. Please help me to exercise this authority to represent you well."

"I choose to receive the revelation you give me like a little child. I will trust the words you speak to me. Thank you that you have given me the Holy Spirit to lead me in freedom and that I am discovering who you are in the journey of my relationship with you. You give me your power and authority to represent you and to bring heaven to earth."

"I will call you Abba Father. My Daddy. You are close to me. I love you and long for your presence. Thank you that I can be at home in your intimate embrace. This is where I belong." Thank you for your unconditional acceptance. You will never forsake me as your child even when I am not perfect. Even when I fail, you will always love me. You know my weaknesses. Please demonstrate your power through my weaknesses."

"I am so grateful to be your child. Thank you for wanting me to be your child and moving heaven and earth to cause this to happen. Help me to make the best choices and to direct my own life to receive the best you have for me. Father God, I love you. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend some time thinking about your true nature as a son or daughter of God. Write in your journal any new aspects of sonship that He shows you. Ask Him how you can live in the fullness of this fresh revelation today.

Review Questions

Match the following aspects of the nature of sonship with the statements below. For example. 1. = D.

1. Identity
2. Royalty
3. Revelation
4. Intimacy
5. Leading
6. Power
7. Acceptance
8. Weakness

A. Receiving God's power and exercising His authority in me to bring heaven to earth.

B. Receiving my inheritance living in authority as royals sons and daughters of the King of the universe)

C. Living in the full acceptance of my Father even when we I am not perfect.

D. Understanding who I am as a son or daughter of the Father.

E. Being at home in an intimate relationship with my Heavenly Father.

F. Not being ashamed to allow my weaknesses to be opportunities for God to reveal His power in me.

G. Receiving in my heart the things which God reveals.

H. Experiencing freedom in the journey in the Father's destiny and purpose for me.

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. D.
2. B.
3. G.
4. E.
5. H.
6. A.
7. C.
8. F.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Are you growing in your sonship with the Father? Are you living in all the aspects of sonship outlined in this section? Which areas do you still need to grow in the most? How are you going to do this? Write in your journal.

10. RESTORING THE HEART OF A SON OR DAUGHTER

– DAY 96 –

Genealogical Lists

Read the following scriptures out loud.

the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda, the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi ... **Luke 3:24-29 (NIV)**

Most of us find the genealogical lists in the Bible among the least exciting parts of Scripture. Often we just skip over them and move onto something that means more to us. They don't mean much to us because they are not our family. But, they are someone's family. Each person in these lists is someone's son or daughter.



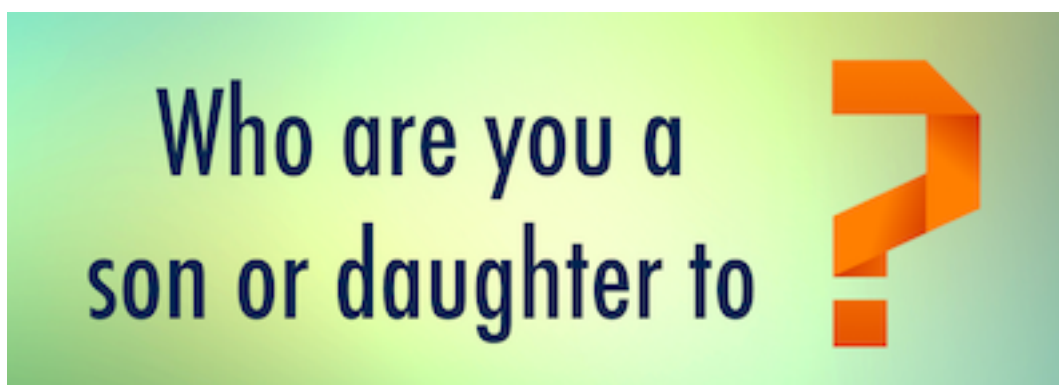
Here are some other sons who you should be more familiar with:

- **Joshua** - son of Nun
- **David** - son of Jesse
- **Isaiah** - son of Amoz
- **Jesus**, son of Joseph / Son of God.

The key question to consider in this section is:

Who are you a son or daughter of?

The answer might seem obvious, but I just want you to hold this question in your heart for now.



Life Roles

In life, there are four main roles we can have as a part of a family. There are others, but I just want to focus on these four for the moment:

- **Child**
- **Son or Daughter**
- **Husband or Wife**
- **Mother or Father**

In life, there are clear transitions into most of these roles. For example:

- To become a child, you need to be born or adopted into a family.
- To become a husband or wife, you need to get married.
- To become a mother or father, you need to give birth to a child or adopt a child.



Did you notice which role I didn't include in the examples?

Son or daughter

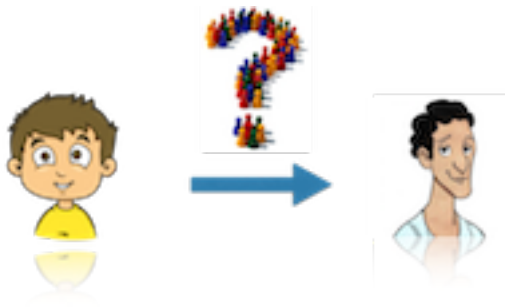
You might say that you become a son or daughter when you are born or adopted into a family. This is true in the conventional way that we use these terms. However, there is something much more profound to understand; and for this, you need to read on. Here are some questions for you to ponder.

Is there a transition from being a child to being a son or daughter?

How does this happen?

When does this happen?

What changes?



Most Important Person

Here is a simple question.

Who is the most important person in a child's life?

Many of us would answer, "The child's parents of course." Even though parents are critically important in a child's life, from a child's perspective the most important person in their lives is themselves. For a child, it is all about "me, myself and I." I know this from my own memories of being a child and also from having my own child. I'm sure you understand what I am saying. It is the nature of a child to be focused on themselves.



– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How would you answer the question, "Who am I a son or daughter to?" Write in your journal. After completing this section, you can come back and look at your answer here and see what might have changed.

– DAY 97 –

Father's Business

What is your favourite dish to eat in all the world? Mine would have to be a fried noodle dish from Malaysia called "char kuey teow." Now, I want you to imagine that you are a father (sorry ladies, you can do this) and that you have a family business that makes the best char kuey teow in town. This family business has been handed down through many generations to you. You know all your customers by name, and many of them are friends because they come so often to buy your fried noodles. Sound good so far?



Surprise! You have a son who is eighteen years old. He has been helping in the family business since he was very young. You had always hoped that one day you could hand the business over to him and retire confident that he will continue the family tradition and even expand the business to other places. This day has now come.

You wonder to yourself what would happen if you gave your son the family business now? What would he do with it? With a heavy heart, you realise that he has other plans for his life. He would probably sell the business and use the money for himself.

Why would the son do this?

*He is your child and is a son in name, but he doesn't yet have the heart of a son.
He is focused on himself.*



Another Scenario

Let's continue with the same story.

Your eighteen-year-old son leaves home and goes to university to study business management. You continue with the family business. One day, your son comes home to visit. He says to you, "Dad, we need to talk. I have some ideas for the family business. I know that it has been your dream to one day expand the business and start other shops I've been thinking about this ever since I started studying business. It would be wonderful for many others, even in other countries, to experience the best char kuey teow in the world!" Your son goes on, "I have put together some ideas for how this could happen. Would you like to have a look at it?" With a heart full of joy and tears in your eyes you start to look at what your son has put together.

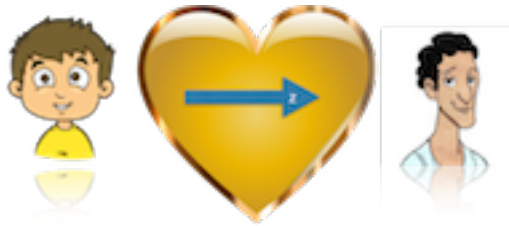


In this second scenario what changed in the son's heart?

Now the son isn't just focused on himself, but also on what is in his father's heart.

This son now has a genuine heart for his father and his father's dreams. This simple story demonstrates what the heart of a true son is like towards his father.

Do you remember the one transition in life that we did not describe earlier? It was the transition from child to son or daughter. Going from being a child to a son or daughter is much more than just growing up physically. It is not even about reaching a particular stage in life that some cultures celebrate as a "coming of age."



Being a son or daughter is all about the kind of heart that you have towards your father and mother.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How would you describe the heart that you have towards your mother and father or towards spiritual parents? Write about this in your journal.

Inner vs. Outer Life

Take no notice of his looks or his height. He is not the one, for the Eternal One does not pay attention to what humans value. Humans only care about the external appearance, but the Eternal considers the inner character. 1 Samuel 16:7 (The Voice)

From this scripture, we know that God values what is going on inside people - the inner character. When I was a child, the emphasis seemed to be on good behaviour. As long as I behaved well, everyone was happy. Something very different could be happening inside me than what I allowed to show on the outside. This humorous story illustrates this point well:

Little Johnny refused to sit down at the dinner table even though his mother had told him to do so many times. Exasperated Johnny's mother finally says to him, "Johnny, if you don't sit down right this minute you will not be getting any dinner." Reluctantly Johnny sits down at the table, looks up at his mother and declares, "On the outside, I'm sitting down, but inside I'm still standing up!"

Being a son or daughter is more about our inner heart than our outward behaviour. Sons and daughters are free to choose how we live towards our parents based on love, respect and honour and what is best for them. This is what it means to honour our parents. A child obeys because of the authority a parent has over them and the power a parent has to enforce this authority. Sons and daughters honour their parents because of love, choosing to give their best to them because they are important to them.

Matching the Inner and Outer Life

It is possible for us to act like “good” children on the outside, but inside we feel something completely different. This is something that we learn as children. We can get used to wearing masks to hide our true feelings and what is happening inside us. We can find that our inner life does not match the outer life that others see. Even as Christians we can get good at pretending before others. Sound familiar at all?



I remember watching a movie where the leading actor was, for a period of time, unable to tell a lie. He had to speak out whatever he was feeling or thinking. As you can imagine this created some embarrassing situations, but imagine what would happen to us if everything we felt on the inside automatically showed up on the outside. It would not be pretty at all. Jesus said that what is inside us will eventually come out anyway. So, there is no use hiding what is going on inside us.



Father God wants His children to be real and authentic. He wants our inside to match our outside. He desires that we live from our inner being so that everyone can see who we really are. We do not need to pretend or wear masks anymore. This is how sons and daughters of Father God can live.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Can you relate to a time when your inner life did not match your outer life? What did it feel like to have to wear masks? Have you found freedom in this area by inviting the Father's love to come on the inside of you? Do this now. Write in your journal what happens.

Getting Father's Love Inside Us

Consider the kind of extravagant love the Father has lavished on us—He calls us children of God! It's true; we are His beloved children **1 John 3:1 (The Voice)**

It is the love of God that transforms us from the inside. It is so important to have the love of Father God inside us. This way, it will be love that comes out of us. When we experience the Father's love, we will begin to know and manifest His heart. Only in this way can a selfish, immature child mature into a godly son or daughter. Then we can begin to love and value others and give our best to them.



We love because He has first loved us. **1 John 4:19 (The Voice)**

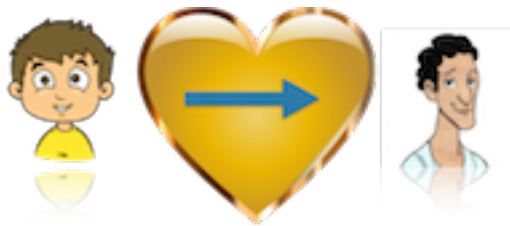
This verse shows us that we can only love because He first loved us. We can only love God and others to the extent that we have received the Father's real love on the inside.

How can we truly have the heart of a son or daughter?

Receive the Father's love on the inside and then show it to others.

Transformation

As you allow Father God to love you there will be a transformation of your heart and entire nature. Let Him embrace you now. You will receive the genuine heart of a son or daughter by being loved by your Heavenly Father. The heart of a child will be transformed into the heart of a son or daughter. When this is your experience, you can then demonstrate the heart of a son or daughter towards your parents and others.



Are you willing to allow this to happen in your heart?

Do you want the heart of a son or daughter?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Are you willing to receive the heart of a son or daughter? Ask the Father what this may look like for you. Write in your journal.

Who Are You a Son or Daughter To?

Let's get back to the important question we asked at the beginning of this section.

Who are you a son or daughter to?

As I said before, the answer might seem obvious. I am the son or daughter of my mother and father. This may be true in a legal and biological sense, but as we have been seeing, there is much more to being a son or daughter. Another way to ask this question would be:

"Who do you have the heart of a son or daughter towards?"

My Testimony

It is time to illustrate what I am saying from some more of my testimony. There was a point in my life when I realised that I didn't have the heart of a son towards my father and mother. I was still their son but was a selfish child focused only on myself. I cursed my parents behind their backs while pretending to do what they wanted. I was leading a "double life." I did not rebel outwardly as some children have done, but my heart was far from my parents. I did not have the heart of a son towards my father or my mother.



I left home as soon as I could to study at a university in another city. I wanted to have my own life and thought I now had freedom. It was not until many years later that I began to experience the love of Father God on the inside and my attitude towards my parents began to change. I realised that I didn't have the heart of a son towards my mother or father. I had never really loved and honoured them. In fact, I had closed my heart towards my parents.

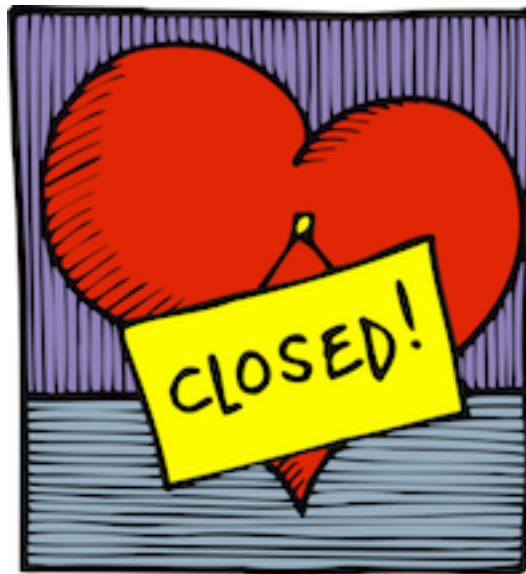
When Father God began to ask me the question - "whose son are you?" - I knew that I did not have the heart of a son towards anyone, especially not my parents.

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Were there times in your life when you closed your heart towards your father or mother? Write in your journal about these experiences.

Closing our Heart

The reason that we may struggle to have the heart of a son or daughter towards our parents is that we have closed our heart to them. There can be specific things that have happened that have caused us to close our heart. Some of us might not even realise that we have done this.



One day when I was about thirteen years old, I was doing a school assignment and wanted to find some pictures to include. In those days there was no internet, so I decided to “borrow” a book from the public library. In fact, I took the book without permission, cut out the pictures I needed and threw away the rest. I am not proud of this event in my childhood. In our household, my mother would administer the physical discipline, but when my parents uncovered my act of stealing the book it was my father who whipped me. Even though what I did was wrong, I had been

trying to do the best school work I could to please my parents. I was hurt inside and very angry with my father. At that moment I closed my heart to him.

There can be many reasons why we close our hearts towards our parents. The result is that we are unable to be a true son or daughter towards them.

Have you closed your heart in any way towards your mother and father?

Restoring the Heart of a Son

When I began to receive the love of Father God into my life, I realised that I didn't have the heart of a son towards my parents. In fact, I didn't have the heart of son towards anyone. As we have already seen in this school, when we become a child of God we receive a new nature. This new nature includes everything we need to live as sons and daughters, not only towards our Heavenly Father but also towards our mother and father, spiritual parents and others. However, God does not force us to receive the heart of a son or daughter. It needs to be our choice and will involve action at some point to demonstrate this new heart. My prayer is that through this school you will encounter the Father's love. In your relationship with Father God, He will then restore to you the ability to love as a son or daughter.

Do you want the heart of a son or daughter?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How is the Father restoring the heart of a son or daughter in you? How are you going to live with this new freedom? Who are you going to be? Write in your journal.

The Truth

The next statement may be hard for you to receive. I know that it was for me.

When you don't have the heart of a son towards your mother and father, it is impossible for you to have the heart of a son or daughter towards God.

Some will say that the way I love people does not affect how I love God. The Bible shows us that this is not true.

*Anyone can say, "I love God," yet have hatred toward another believer. This makes him a phoney, because if you don't love a brother or sister, whom you can see, how can you truly love God, whom you can't see? For he has given us this command: whoever loves God must also demonstrate love to others. **1 John 4:20-21 (The Passion)***



There is a very real connection between loving people and loving God. Nowhere is this truer than with our parents. If we have not been able to love our parents and have closed our heart towards them in any way, then our heart will struggle to have a close intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father. I can testify that this has been true in my own life. As I have received the heart of a son towards my father and mother and learned to express real love and honour towards them, my relationship with Father God has become more real and intimate. By demonstrating the heart of a son towards both my natural and spiritual parents my heart has been freed to grow in relationship with Father God and to live freely as His son. This journey will be different for everyone, but it begins by opening our heart to Father God and asking Him the question:

How do you want me to receive the heart of a son or daughter?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Can you see the connection between having the heart of a son or daughter towards our parents and how this affects our relationship with Father God? Spend some time talking to the Father about this. Write in your journal what He shows you.

Prayer

"Father God, thank you for being my Father. I also want to thank you for my earthly father and mother. Thank you that they gave me life and so much more. I ask that you forgive me for not living as a son or daughter towards my father and mother and for any way that I have closed my heart towards them. Please forgive me for all the things I have held in my heart towards my parents that were not love and honour. I have tried to look good on the outside while holding anger, disappointment, rejection, and fear in my heart towards them. Please forgive me."

"Father God, I ask that you would fill me from the inside with your real love. Thank you that you are my loving Father and that you love me as a precious son or daughter. I receive your love that transforms my heart and enables me to be a true son or daughter to you and to others."

"Today, I open my heart to you and receive the heart of a son or daughter. I choose to love and honour my parents with the same kind of love you give to me. I choose to value them and their heart. Please help me to demonstrate to them the heart of a son or daughter. Show me practically what love looks like. Give me the courage to love and to be a son or daughter. As I do this, I believe that my heart will be freed to have a deeper connection with you as my Heavenly Father. Amen."

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

How does it feel to have the heart of a son or daughter? How is this changing your relationship with Father God? Write in your journal.

Section Activity

I want to encourage you to pray through the prayer in this section before doing this activity. Then take some time to answer the following questions:

- **How have I closed my heart towards my father or mother?**
- **What is a practical way that I can demonstrate the heart of a son or daughter towards my parents.**
- **When am I going to do this?**

Remember, a journey starts with just one step. I pray that you will have the courage to take this step as an amazing son or daughter of your Heavenly Father.

Review Questions

1. What is the transition in life roles that I said is most difficult to define?
2. How does a child become a son or daughter?
3. What is Father God's goal regarding our inner and outer life?
4. How can sons and daughters truly honour their parents?
5. How are we able to love?
6. What negative thing happens when we close our heart towards our parents?
7. What happens when we receive the heart of a son or daughter towards our parents?

Suggested Answers to Review Questions

1. The transition from a child to a son or daughter
2. By receiving a genuine heart of love towards their father and mother and considering their heart and what is important to them.
3. He wants our inner life to match our outer life so that we can be who we are without needing to wear masks.
4. By choosing to love and giving our best to our parents because they are worth it.
5. By receiving the love of Father God on the inside of us. We can then love in the same way that He loved us.

6. We will find it difficult to have an intimate heart relationship with Father God.
7. We can develop an intimate relationship and connection with Father God.

– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Would you be able to share the message in this section with someone? Spend some time preparing your testimony. Write this in your journal.

11. SONSHIP JOURNEY

– DAY 106 –

Introduction

Growing in sonship is a journey. As sons and daughters, each of our journeys is unique but has one true destination: the embrace of Father God.

In this section, I would like to share with you some of my sonship journey. I pray that my experiences will encourage you that as Father God is speaks to you and draws you closer in the journey of your sonship.

Revelation

Revelation is the truth God reveals or unveils to us. These are truths that He speaks to us and implants in our heart that bring life and freedom. Someone has said that revelation is like a diamond ring. A valuable ring is typically made of gold, silver or platinum. A ring only becomes a “diamond ring” when the diamond is placed in a setting on the ring. Then the ring becomes even more precious. Revelation is like this diamond ring.

There are many areas of revelation that God gives us such as forgiveness, grace, faith, authority and power and much, much more. This kind of revelation is like a gold ring. However, the revelation of God as our Father and the love He gives to us as His sons and daughters is like the diamond - it completes the ring. I believe that

this revelation of the heart of Father God towards us complements, enhances and completes all other revelation.

Revelation Blocks

One day several years ago, I was going for a long walk and praying as I walked. My thoughts began to drift towards some of the things that God had revealed to me in my walk with Him over the years. I began to see that there had been different seasons in my life that were characterised by a particular revelation that I received from God. It occurred to me that these revelations were the building blocks that I had used to build my life. They have helped define my life and determine the path that I have taken to different nations and kingdom assignments.



Made with my Father

As I thought more about the seasons of my life being like blocks, I decided to make actual wooden blocks to represent each of the revelations that I had received. Sometimes something which we can see and touch helps remind us of the things that are unseen but just as real. Wonderfully, I was spending some time with my

parents, and I asked my father to help me to craft the blocks. He agreed and together we measured, sawed, planed, sanded, lacquered, added lettering and then admired our handiwork. Father and son were spending time together. It was not until later than I understood the full significance of this special time.

At this stage, we need to go back 30 years, near the beginning of my sonship journey.



– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend some time looking back over your journey with the Lord. What are some of the areas of revelation he has given you? How has this affected the way you live towards Him? Write in your journal.

Worker Revelation

*And this good news of God's kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, a testimony to all people and all nations. Then, beloved, the end, the consummation of all things, will come. **Matthew 24:14(The Voice)***

This verse was my first “life scripture.” It came as a revelation to my heart that would forever alter the course of my life! I began to sense God’s heart and love for all the peoples of the earth. There were so many people groups that had never heard the gospel and had no one to bring the good news to them. “Let me be a part of bringing the Kingdom to all people and nations.” I cried. “I want Jesus to return!” There was so much work to do. The task is massive, and we should all be a part of it. My message became “Pray, Give, Go!” I began by praying and giving and then going. I have been going to the nations ever since, hoping one day to hear Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”



Master and Servant

As God’s worker, I related to Him mostly as my Lord and Master. He gave the orders, and I willingly obeyed for the sake of the cause. I saw myself as a worker, an obedient

servant, and a labourer in the harvest field. I worked hard to please the Master and to make my life count for the Kingdom.

After many years of living in this revelation and having the privilege of seeing the gospel come for the first time among several unreached people groups, I began to sense that something was not right in my life. I could see that my inner need to earn the approval of God and man was causing me to strive and perform. There was always more work to do, and I was never content. While serving the Lord in this way, I experienced physical and emotional burnout twice before the age of twenty-five. Despite the outward veneer of success in ministry, I was disillusioned and discouraged. I was striving to earn God's approval, and it was slowly killing me. In my heart, I knew that something had to change.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Can you identify with working hard to earn approval from God and people? How has this worked in your life? What negative aspects have you found living in the revelation of being God's worker?

Worshiper Revelation

I looked and saw a huge crowd of people, which no one could even begin to count, representing every nation and tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and waving palm branches. They cried out with one loud voice. Salvation comes only from our God, who sits upon the throne, and from the Lamb **Revelation 7:9-10 (The Voice)**

When I first sensed a call to the nations, I would often close my eyes during worship and have a vision of multitudes of peoples from different nations worshipping around the throne of God. This revelation grew in my heart - all the peoples of the earth were uniquely created to worship God in their own unique way so that they would bring glory to Him. My life message became: The ultimate goal is worship – to bring people of all nations to the throne of God to worship Him. I longed to see this prophetic vision take place upon the earth.



The Worthy One

I began to relate to God as King of the universe; the One who is worthy of all praise, worship, and honour. He is worthy of the heart expression of worship by people from every tongue, tribe, and nation. My highest call was to be a worshiper, one who brings glory to the King of all kings.



Over the years I've had the privilege of being a part of some of the first expressions of worship among people groups who have only recently become open to the gospel. It has been amazing to see this vision being fulfilled with my own eyes: God establishing true worship in every corner of the globe.



However, there was still a struggle going on in my heart. I've never doubted the worthiness of God to be worshipped, but often I would feel unworthy to come before Him as a worshiper. God was awesome and holy, but this seemed to make Him somewhat unapproachable and distant. I strived to live a perfect Christian life so that I could truly worship Him in Spirit and in truth. There was still the nagging question in my heart, "Will I ever be holy enough for Him?" "How can I worship Him when I mess up?" This kind of thinking led to a lot of striving in my life and hindered

an intimate relationship with God. I thought that only when I was “at my best” could I truly worship Him and give Him the glory He deserves.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Do you have the revelation of being called as a worshiper of God? How does this look for you? Write in your journal.

Warrior Revelation

The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work **1 John 3:8b**
(NIV)

Growing up in a Western nation with a rationalistic worldview largely blinded me to the reality of spiritual warfare described in Scripture. It was not until I began to prayer walk among unreached people groups in Asia that I began to see the reality of the spiritual battle going on for the hearts and minds of all peoples and the demonic powers of darkness that hold people in bondage. The first time I entered a Tibetan Buddhist temple and felt the palpable evil is an experience I will never forget. I began to see the desperate need in the world for the light of God to come into the darkness and bring freedom to the captives. Of course, this spiritual battle is happening everywhere, but without a release of the power and presence of God in these dark places, these peoples would remain in darkness. I had to play my part in bringing the light of God that would set them free.



The Conquering King

I began to see God as the all-conquering and victorious King. He is the Commander in Chief and the Lord of hosts, mighty in battle.

Jesus came to set the captives free. My part was to be a warrior of light enforcing His victory by bringing His light to the darkest places. Intercession, spiritual warfare, deliverance, freedom for the captives became the priorities of my life and ministry.



There are many stories to tell of victory, breakthroughs, and light coming into darkness. Seeing captives released and unreached people groups coming into the Kingdom of God is wonderful.



At times, however, the spiritual darkness I encountered was overwhelming. I became a tired and battle weary soldier. There seemed to be no place for me to be refreshed and renewed and there were always so many needs. At one stage in the midst of the battle, I became sick with an undiagnosed illness. Later I would find that this illness had a spiritual element and that I needed deliverance myself. I was left feeling weak, weary and defeated. How could I continue to fight as a warrior in this condition? There must be more!



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever felt tired and defeated in the spiritual battle? What did you do to get restored? Write about this experience.

Friend Revelation

I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **John 15:15 (NIV)**

They suddenly recognise that God is a living, personal presence, not a piece of chiselled stone. And when God is personally present, a living Spirit, that old, constricting legislation is recognised as obsolete. We're free of it! All of us! Nothing between God and us our faces shining with the brightness of his face. And so we are transfigured much like the Messiah, our lives gradually becoming brighter and more beautiful as God enters our lives and we become like him. **2 Corinthians 3:17-18 (The Message)**

God wants to reveal Himself personally to us as an intimate friend. He desires to be “personally present” in our lives.

A Personal Friend

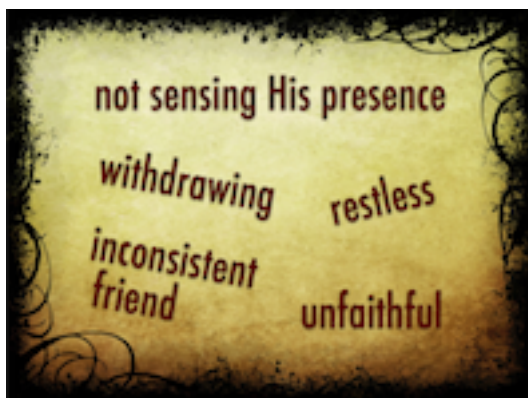
God became my intimate friend as I experienced His powerful presence in a personal way. He was no longer distant and unapproachable.

As a friend, I began to experience an intimacy with God that I never dreamed was possible. Encounters with the Holy Spirit changed my life in profound ways that words cannot begin to express. He liked me and loved to share His secrets with me. I learned to hear His voice and to know His presence.



I began to live out of the revelation of Jesus as my intimate friend. His presence became so real and personal to me. I began to see the supernatural power of God operating around me. What could be better than this?

However, I still had a problem. There were times when I didn't sense His presence and closeness as I had at other times. Jesus is an incredibly faithful friend, but at times I struggled to be this same kind of friend to Him. When I went through struggles, I found myself withdrawing my heart from Him. "There must be something wrong with me," I thought. I discovered that many other believers felt just like me. There were still deep inner issues of love, acceptance, and belonging that remained unsatisfied in my life.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

What does it mean for you to be a friend of God? When do you most experience His presence and closeness? Have there been times when you could not sense His presence? What did you do? Write about these times in your journal.

Questions

Over the years I've discovered that many other believers like me felt that there was something that was missing in their relationship with God. If we are willing to be completely honest, there are some deep questions that have not been adequately answered in our hearts.



Questions like:

- Am I unconditionally loved?
- Am I known?
- Am I valued?

- Am I good enough?
- Am I accepted?
- Do I belong?

I believe that there is one primary place that the answers to these questions are to be found.

The Revelation of Father

God is an amazing, loving Father. He has always been Father. He desires us to experience Him as our Heavenly Father. The reason Jesus came to earth was to bring us to His Father. The true revelation of who we are is only found in the revelation of our Father's love for us. I believe that everyone is looking for their real Father and we will only be "at home" when we fully live in our Father God's loving embrace.



The Revelation of Sons & Daughters

As God's children, we become a son or daughter. Only as a son (or daughter) are we always:

- Unconditionally loved
- Totally accepted

- Absolutely secure
- Eternally valued
- Able to rest
- AND ... able to live from our truest identity.

These things and much more are our inheritance as sons and daughters, but this is not always our experience.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

Have you ever asked yourself these type of questions: "Am I loved? Do I belong?" , etc. How would you answer them now? Write in your journal.

My Sonship Experience

I would like to share with you an experience which profoundly changed my life. This experience brought me face-to-face with my own need to know my Heavenly Father and into a new place of sonship with Him.

One day I parked my bicycle in an attended bicycle parking place outside the supermarket near where I lived and went to do some shopping. Afterwards, I came out to find that my bike had been jammed in and tangled up with several others. It proved somewhat difficult to extract my bike, so I asked the attendant to help me. At first, he ignored me completely while puffing away on his cigarette. So, I asked again for help, but he refused to lift a finger. By this stage, there was anger growing from within me like a volcanic eruption. I began to pick up the bicycles near mine and throw them aside to get my bike out. As I was leaving, I glared at the attendant and told him what I thought about him and his poor service.



Later that day, I was sitting in my office at home feeling ashamed of what had happened earlier. There were all sorts of condemning thoughts going through my mind, but the predominant one was this, "How could I represent Father God in this place when I act like that?" I felt like a failure and that I had let God down. As my thoughts spiralled down further into self-pity, I suddenly and unexpectedly heard God speak to me. I recognised the firm, but loving voice of my Father. He simply

said to me, "Stand up." So, I stood up. After a moment He spoke again and said, "Take a step backwards." I didn't pause to analyse why He was asking me to do this and so I just took a step backwards.

Instantly, I felt something like arms come around me and a robe was placed over my shoulders. Then, Father God spoke to my heart, "This is sonship, this is where you belong." I knew in that instant, despite the mess that I had made, I was unconditionally loved and accepted and because I was a son, that this would never change.

This precious encounter with the Father released me into a new level of sonship that transformed my heart. I was experiencing the Father's embrace, and I often find myself in this place of being loved just because I am a son.

Just to finish the story. I did go back and apologise to the parking attendant for my behaviour. I'm not sure what he thought about the whole thing, but I felt better.

Are you ready to step into a new place in your Father's love as His son or daughter?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Have you had encounters with the Father? Ask your Father for more. Write about one of these in your journal.

Foundational Revelation

There is amazing truth and freedom in every revelation of who God is and who we are. I am so thankful for all the revelation I have received over the years, but this foundational revelation of the love of Father God and who we are as His sons and daughters puts all other revelation in a right perspective.

As a worker and a son I never need to perform or earn approval. I am completely accepted and unconditionally loved by my Father no matter what others think. I don't need to strive anymore, and even while working, I can rest.

As a worshiper and a son, I am always able to come near to my Father even while being in reverence and awe of His majesty. On the very same throne that I worship before, I can climb up and jump into Daddy God's lap and be with Him.

As a warrior and a son, I discover true authority is found only in sonship. I carry my Father's authority not because of what I do, but because of who I am as a royal son.

As a friend and a son it does not matter whether I sense His presence or not, I belong in Him. Nothing can change my family status and disqualify me from His embrace.

The more I encounter the Father's love, the more I realise that I'm just beginning this journey of sonship and knowing my incredible Father.



There are so many more areas of revelation of who God is and therefore who we are in him that I haven't mentioned in my story. Some of these, or others, may have been powerful revelations of who you are in God:

- Bride of Christ
- Ambassadors
- Anointed vessels
- Prophetic voices
- Priests and kings
- Intercessors
- Disciples
- Freedom carriers
- Blessing releasers etc. etc.



The revelation of God as our Father and us being His son or daughter is the diamond in the ring. The Father's embrace is the only place that fulfils our deepest longings and most completely reveals who we are. All other aspects of our identity come into right focus when we are living as His son or daughter in our Father's love.

Where are you in your sonship journey?

Have you discovered the diamond of revelation and been able to apply this to all that you are and are becoming?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Spend some time thinking about the question, "Where am I in my sonship journey with the Father?" Examine all the different areas of your identity and ask the Father to show you how each part only finds its fullness in sonship with the Father.

Section Activity

In this activity I want you to consider the “revelation blocks” in your own life by answering these questions. Write them down in your journal and take as much time as you need. There are no set answers to these questions because each of us is unique and individually loved by the Father and we each have our own sonship journey:

Who is God to you?

What has God shown you about your identity in Him? Who are you?

How can Father God’s love and your sonship impact every other area of your identity?

What is the Father speaking to you through this school that is becoming your “diamond of revelation”?

Prayer

Would you allow me to pray for you again?

“Father God, I thank you for each precious child of yours and the sonship journey they have embarked upon. You have revealed yourself to them in wonderful ways through revelation. I thank you that they have been discovering who they are in you as a son or daughter.”

“I pray that the foundational revelation of you as Father and them as a son or daughter will bring everything else into perspective. I ask that you would encounter your children with your love and bring them into a greater place of sonship.”

“Father, I thank you that the deepest issues in their lives will be answered in their relationship with you as their Father. They will know that they are eternally and unconditionally loved. They will experience total acceptance, even in weakness. They will learn to live under the gaze of your pleasure even before they do anything for you. They will experience safety and security even in the wildest storms of life. They will know that they are valued more than anything else. They will experience the true joy and rest that is only available for your children who live in your loving embrace. Amen.”

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Are you willing to move on in your sonship journey? Ask the Father what this will look like for you? Write in your journal.

– DAY 116 –

Review Questions

I'm not going to ask you any review questions in this section. I would like you to do the activity and by asking yourself the most important question:

How does the revelation of the Father Heart of God change everything about who I am?

– DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY –

Continue to mediate and pray about the question above. Write in your journal.

– DAY 117 –

LOOKING BACK - PART 1

We have covered a great amount of ground in this school as we have begun to unpack the revelation of the Father Heart of God. At this point, it would be helpful to look back at each section and review some of the key discoveries we have made. My prayer is that these truths will sink deeper and deeper into our hearts.

Biblical Basis

- When Jesus ascended to heaven, He returned to His Father's side. We can also call this place the Father's embrace. Jesus wants us to live in the embrace of His loving Father.
- Jesus is just like His Father. He shows us exactly what Father God is like. The way we see Jesus loving people is the same way that the Father loves us.
- The way to the Father is by becoming God's son (or daughter) just as Jesus is.
- The Father showed His Son Jesus everything He was doing. We are invited into this same kind of relationship. Jesus' Father has become our Father.



Orphan Heart

- Father God says to us, "I will not leave you as orphans I will come to you."
- Lucifer was the first orphan. He rejected the fathering of God and tried to make his own way to be like God.
- Adam was born into a perfect love relationship with His Father. However, Adam and Eve tried to find their own way to be like God apart from their relationship as a son and daughter. This is where religion began.
- There are many differences between the way an orphan thinks and lives and that of a son or daughter. We can live fully as sons and daughters of Father God in every aspect of our lives.

- Father God has promised that He will come to us. We don't need to strive to get to Him by our own religious effort. We live in an orphan world, but we have been introduced to our true Father, and so we are no longer like orphans. We can choose to live as the Father's sons and daughters that we are!



The Amazing Father

- Jesus' purpose in telling us the story about the father and the lost son was to introduce us to His Father and to show us what Father God is really like towards us. He is an Amazing Father!
- Father God always wants His children to be home with Him so that we can experience love, security, affirmation, protection, comfort, peace, identity, destiny and His inheritance.
- The only thing that will fill the space in our hearts is a real love relationship with Father God as a son or daughter.
- The first step in "coming home" is to remember what a good, loving Father we have. We can choose to stop living like God's sons and daughters, but He will never stop being our Father and welcoming us to be "at home" with Him.

- Even as children of the Father we can still at times think and act like an orphan by trying to earn His love and acceptance.
- Father God knows us completely and loves us unconditionally. Even in the midst of weakness, failure and shame He will come to us, embrace us and restore us.
- Father God honours and accepts us as His sons and daughters. He gives us true authority and an abundant inheritance. We can live in our fullest identity as the Father proudly displays us to the world.



Elder Brothers

- The elder son related to his father more as a servant than as a son and did not value a close relationship with Him. Father God desires His children to live in the place of love and acceptance.
- Love is a free gift and never a reward for service. Love cannot be earned, but only freely given and received.
- The attitudes in our life and the way that we react towards others show how much we share the heart of our Heavenly Father.
- The only way to avoid having elder brother attitudes is to receive the Father's love for ourselves and then to freely represent His love to others.

- Love is always more important than the rules. Rules will never bring us into the relationship that Father God desires to have with us.
- Father God wants His children who are still like elder brothers to “come inside” to be with Him and to experience His love. In this place, we hear the promise of the Father - “you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.”



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

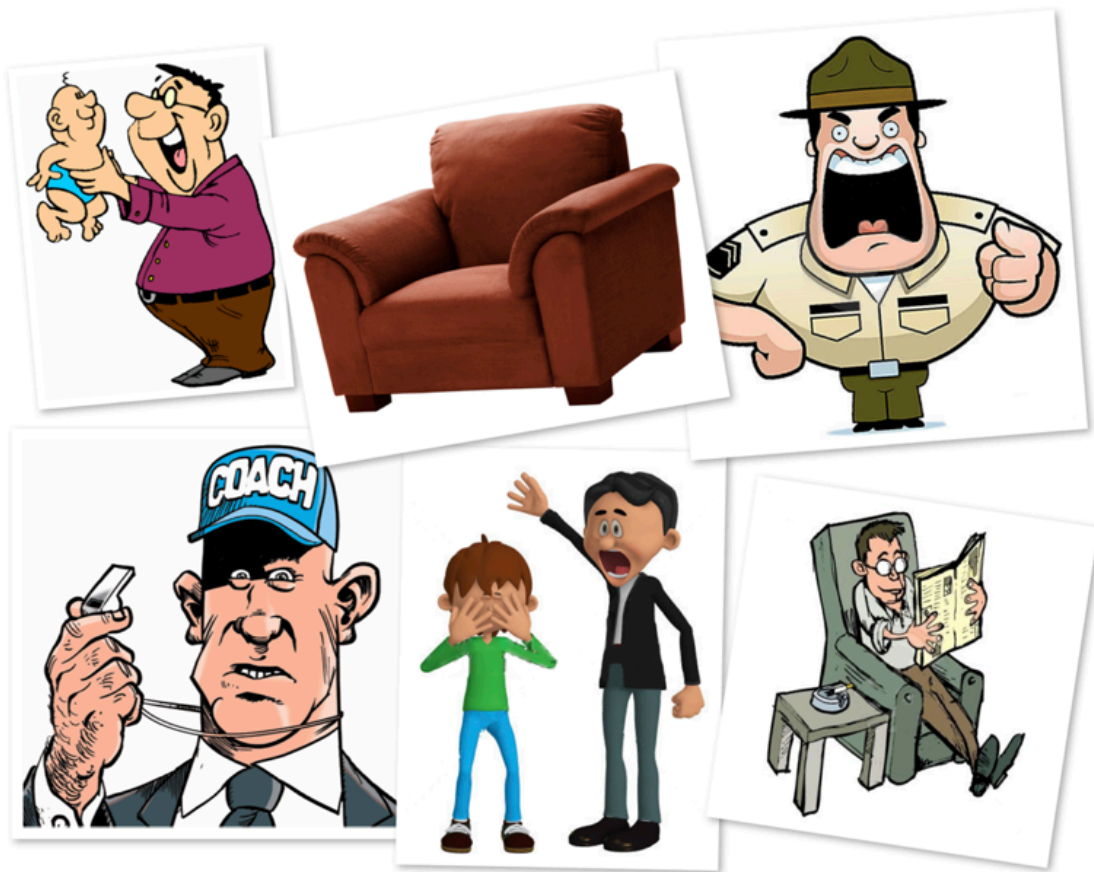
Which truths have spoken to you the most from this part of the review? Why?
Write in your journal.

– DAY 118 –

LOOKING BACK - PART 2

Father Lenses

- Father God has always been Father. All earthly fathers are given as an expression of our Heavenly Father's heart as a father.
- Father God designed and created earthly fathers to represent Him as the perfect Heavenly Father - to reflect His love, kindness, and goodness to their children.
- The experiences we have had with our earthly father and mother have created our "father lenses" through which we see Father God.
- We can believe lies about who Father God is and what He is like based on our experiences with an imperfect father and mother.
- Father God is not just good some of the time; He is good all the time. He is the perfect Father we need and is never demanding, passive, absent, rule-keeping or abusive.
- Father God is giving us new "father lenses" that are based on truth so that we can see and know Him as He really is and not just as we think He is.



Heart Forgiveness

- Jesus said that we must forgive from our heart. It is in our heart that we carry the anger, wounds, and pain caused by the words and actions of others. Therefore, to fully forgive, we must forgive from our heart.
- We should always forgive. This is the pattern Father God gave us when He forgave us completely. When we forgive we are being like our Father.
- When people sin against us, a debt is formed that is owed to us. We must know the debt that is owed to us in order to cancel the debt and release others from what they owe to us.

- Heart forgiveness costs us any right we have for the person to repay us and means that we give up all need for judgment and that we no longer withhold love from them.
- Heart forgiveness sets us free and also brings freedom to the one we are forgiving.



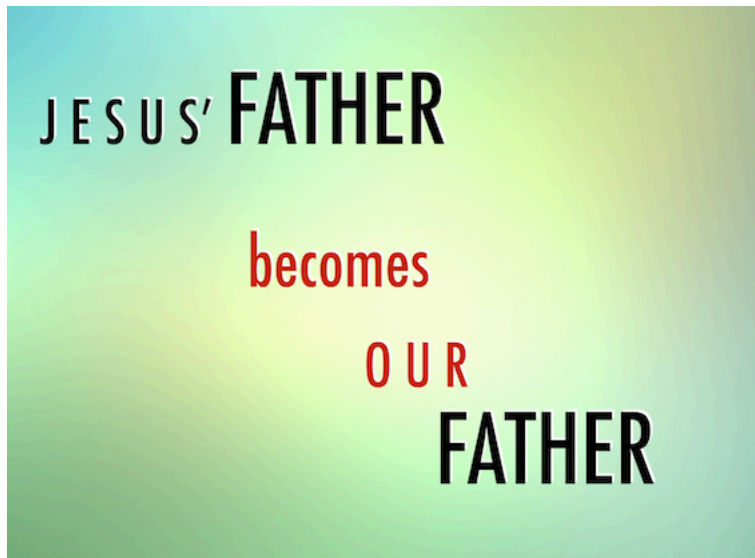
Eternal Love

- God is love, and therefore He loves. He always operates from the supreme motivation of His own love and never from fear, obligation or selfish reward.
- The true reason for Jesus' joy was knowing His Father's joy and pleasure as lost children would be coming home to His Father.
- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have always been family. They are the original, Eternal Family.
- We have always been loved by the Father. He has always planned for us to have a relationship with Him as sons and daughters based on His unconditional love.
- Father God uses everything possible to bring us into the reality of His eternal love and into an experience of His love that He planned to lavish on us all along.



Father-Son Relationship

- In the New Covenant, God is on both sides of the covenant representing Himself and representing people who are in Christ.
- When we come into Christ, we become a son or a daughter of the Father because we come into Jesus the Son. Jesus' Father becomes our Father.
- Jesus the Son became a man so that we could come to the Father and see how to live as sons and daughters of the Father just as Jesus did as a man.
- Jesus came to bring us to His Father. Jesus came so that we could have a relationship with His Father as sons and daughters. We can experience the same kind of relationship with Father God that Jesus has with His Father.
- Jesus' relationship with His Father was His source of life. This relationship was growing and active. We also need to grow in our own relationship with Father God.



– **DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY** –

*Which truths have spoken to you the most from this part of the review? Why?
Write in your journal.*

– DAY 119 –

LOOKING BACK - PART 3

The Nature of Sonship

Identity is who I am uniquely as a son or daughter of the Father.

Royalty is receiving my inheritance while living in true authority as a royal son or daughter of the King of the universe.

Revelation is receiving into my heart the things which God reveals to me.

Intimacy is being at home in a relationship of oneness with my Father.

Leading is experiencing the freedom of the Holy Spirit directing my journey into the Father's destiny and purpose for my life.

Power is exercising His authority in me to bring heaven to earth.

Acceptance is living in the knowledge that I am fully accepted by my Father even when I am not perfect.

Weakness is not being ashamed to allow my weaknesses to be opportunities for God to reveal His power in me.



Restoring the Heart of a Son or Daughter

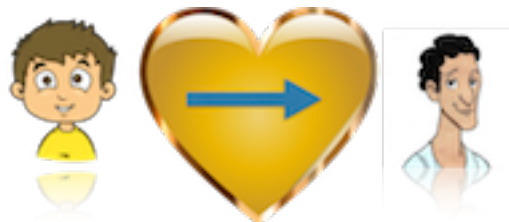
The most difficult transition in life to define is from being a child to becoming a son or daughter.

We become a son or daughter by receiving a genuine heart of love towards our father and mother and considering their heart and what is important to them.

As a son or a daughter, we can truly honour our parents by choosing to love them and giving our best to them because they are worth it.

Father God's goal is for our inner life to match our outer life so that we can be who we are without masks. We can only do this by receiving the love of Father God on the inside. We can then love in the same way that He loved us.

If we have closed our heart towards our father or mother, we will find it difficult to have an intimate heart relationship with Father God. When we receive the heart of a son or daughter towards our mother or father, it will be easier to develop an intimate relationship and connection with Father God.



Sonship Journey

Our life is built upon blocks of revelation about who God is and who we are in Him.

Every true revelation finds its highest expression in the Father Heart of God and who we are as His sons and daughters.



—DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY —

Which truth has spoken to you the most from this part of the review? Why? Write in your journal.

APPLICATION

– DAY 120 –

Relational Journey

Knowing and experiencing God as our Father is a relational journey which never ends. The Father heart of God is not simply a theology or a teaching that we learn and then move on to other things. We need to keep learning, growing and experiencing Him as our Father. The revelation of the Father Heart of God needs to soak fully into every part of our heart and life. This process takes time and cooperation from us. The journey cannot be rushed. We will find ourselves needing to “come home” to the Father many times, and this is OK.



There are areas of our life waiting to be transformed as we enter more fully into sonship. Some of these areas will take more time than others. Sometimes significant people in our life are not ready for you to teach them this revelation, they will first

need to see it in your life. I encourage you not to “force” what you have learned on to others. Let revelation transform who you are naturally. You may find that there are some situations in your life that need a total overhaul based on who you now know that you are as a beloved son or daughter. Don’t rush into radical changes in your life before you can live out the revelation you have been receiving. Let it grow in you and affect others around you. Guard against becoming critical where you see the orphan heart in operation in people's lives. Begin to demonstrate the heart of the Father to others around you. Live as a son or daughter of the Father yourself. Ask yourself the question, “Who should I be?”, before answering the question, “What should I do.”

Passing the Father’s Heart on to Others

The time will come when you will pass this revelation of the Father Heart of God on to others. This may be in your church, home-group or among friends and family. As you share this knowledge with others, revelation will be strengthened within you. This school is designed to be passed on to others just as it is, but is best used when people can see the change in your life. You may consider starting a small group to work through this school and get together regularly to discuss what you are learning and experiencing. Remember, your life does not need to be perfect before you pass this on to others. We are all growing in sonship together.



Thank you for taking the time to go all the way through this school and devotional journey. I pray that Father God is so much more real to you now and that you will continue to experience His love and grow as a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.

—DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITY —

As a final devotional activity, I want to encourage you to write out your own testimony from participating in this journey. What have you learned? What revelation have you received? How have you encountered the Father and experienced His love? What is He now like as a Father towards you? How do you see yourself differently now? Write from your heart and not from your head only. Pass your testimony on to someone that you love.

Abundant blessings to you in the Father's Great Love