

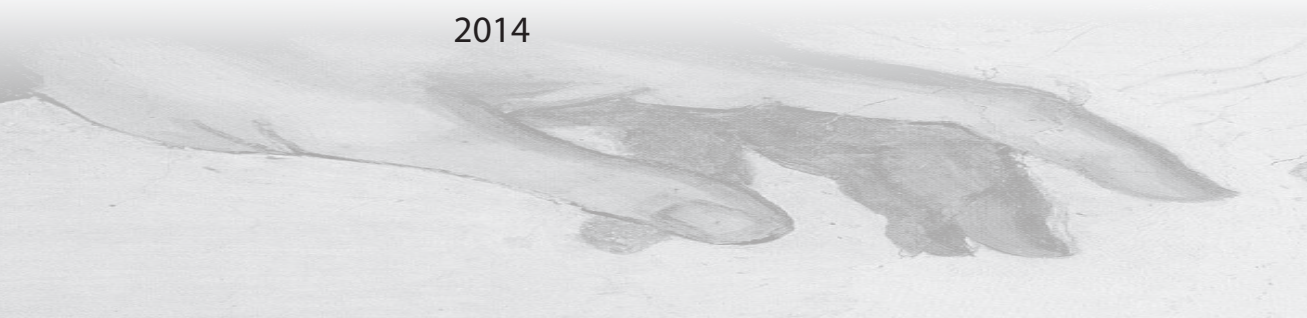


The Fatherhood of God

Grace Church of DuPage



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The Fatherhood of God



Session #1 - The Father Factor

Why are Dads so important?

1. The unique role of a father
 - a. Mal 4:6
 - b. Eph 6:4
 - c. Eph 3:14-15
 - d. John 14:8

2. Examples from history and media

Four streams of God's Father heart

We see God's father heart most clearly as we watch the perfect relationship he has with the Son. Twice in Scripture we actually overhear him talking to Jesus. Looking at these two encounters a powerful picture emerges. What does he say?

Matt 3:17

Matt 17:5





The four streams communicated through his words:

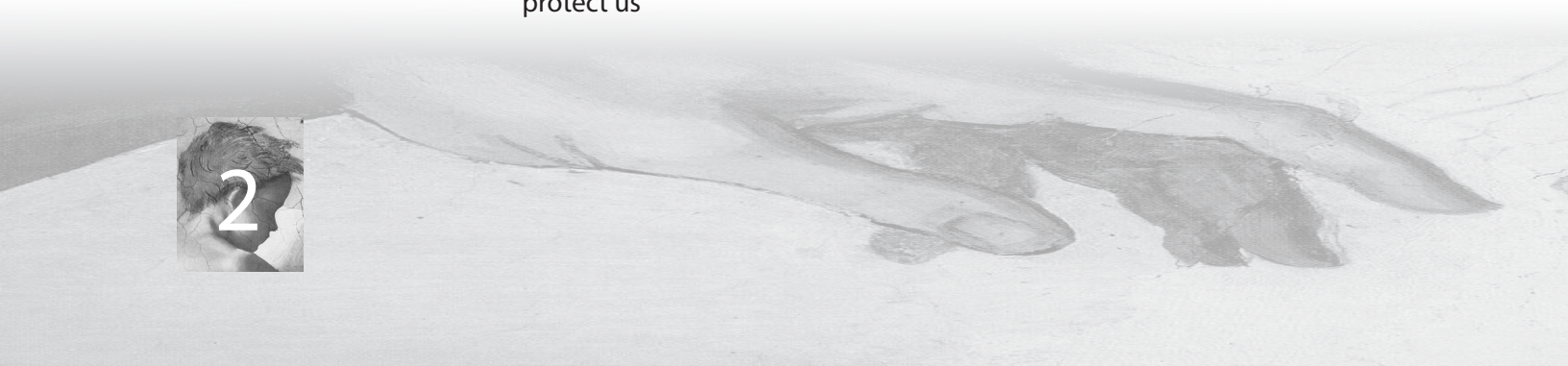
1. Identity
2. Love
3. Pleasure
4. Place

How did Jesus experience the four streams of God's Father heart?

1. Identity – John 5:16-19
2. Love – John 5:20
3. Pleasure – John 5:30, 41-44
4. Place – John 5:21-27

Why do our earthly fathers fail?

1. Because of the fall
2. Because their fathers failed
3. Because we need more than they can give
4. Because other "father figures" fail us, and our father can't adequately protect us



What do we experience from our dads, or other father figures in our lives?

1. Father gifts
2. Father wounds
3. Father vacuums

Illustration:



How does this affect our relationships and behavior?

1. **Father Gifts** produce ...
 - a. a generous and open flow of giving
 - b. responsive and grateful receiving
(like blood flowing in and out of a heart)
2. **Father Wounds** produce ...
 - a. distortions (overreaction, anger, attack, despair). The response does not match the event. This is because it touches already existing pain.
(the amplifier)
 - b. protection – barriers designed to protect us from more pain
(the tin man)
3. **Father Vacuums** produce...
 - a. pulls – constant attempts to fill the vacuum with something else
(the vacuum cleaner)
 - b. walls – turning off or closing down this area of our hearts. Acting as if we have no needs or desires in this area. This creates a certain “deadness”, or indifference.
(the zombie)





Symptoms of father deficiency

1. Identity

Who am I? Am I valuable? Do I have to be just like you to be significant? Am I competent, capable?

Without identity from the Father you will be defined by the people and circumstances around you. This will be constantly changing, and unstable. You will be very vulnerable to your environment, and not have a clear sense of self. You will constantly need to prove yourself, or defend yourself.

- Instead of "I failed" you think "I am a failure"
- Instead of "They are disappointed" you think "I am disappointing"
- Instead of "It didn't work, I have to try again" you think "I am incapable"
- Instead of "that wasn't worthwhile" you think "I am worthless"
- Instead of "your opinion is important" you think "I am what you think of me"

2. Love

Am I loved unconditionally? Am I precious and treasured to someone? Do I matter to anyone? Does someone care deeply about me? Do I feel and hear your love and affection?

Without love from the Father will be constantly trying to gain love from those near you. Their love will never be enough and you will be chronically disappointed. You may cope by turning off your emotions and becoming distant and cold.

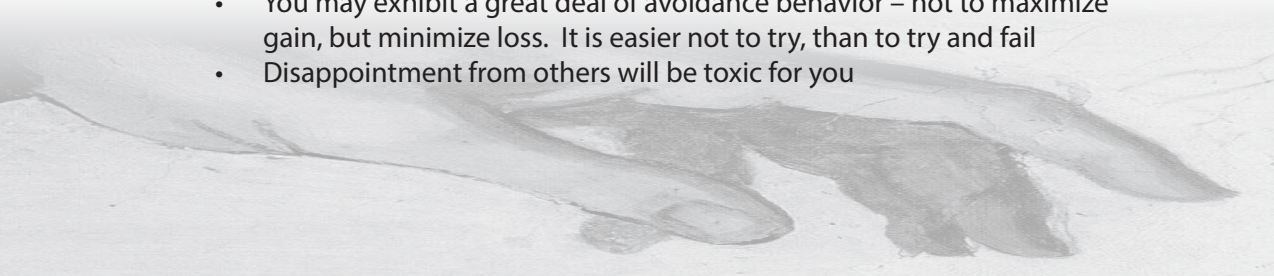
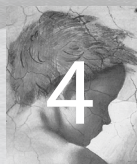
- You will have a hard time trusting love
- It may not penetrate
- Your relationships will become consumed with getting rather than giving
- You will have a hard time giving love to others

3. Pleasure

Are you proud of me, do you delight in me? Are you pleased with who I am, do you enjoy my presence? Do you like being with me? Do I bring you joy?

Without pleasure from the Father you will become addicted to pleasing people, and vulnerable to hedonism. You may cope by avoiding all possibility of failure or rejection.

- You could be easily addicted to almost anything – food, alcohol, money, clothes, sex, adrenalin, unhealthy relationships
- On the other hand, you may be passionless, without excitement, dead to joy and healthy pleasure
- You may exhibit a great deal of avoidance behavior – not to maximize gain, but minimize loss. It is easier not to try, than to try and fail
- Disappointment from others will be toxic for you





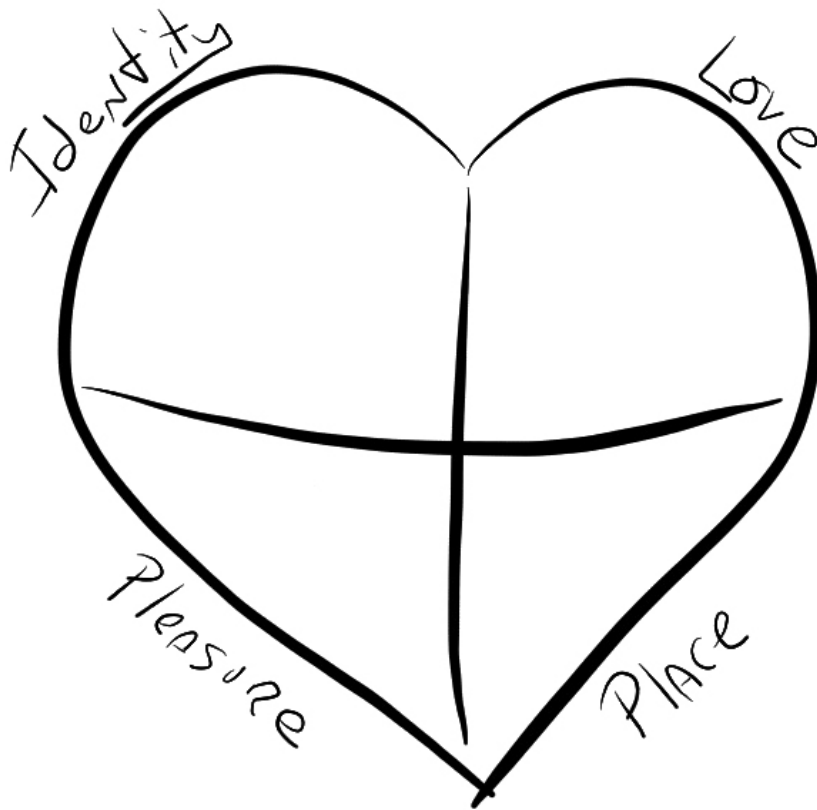
4. Place

Do I have purpose, does my life matter? Is there some place that is uniquely mine, do I fit? Do I belong, am I a part of something bigger than myself? Do I have something to give, would you notice if I was gone?

Without place from the Father you will be constantly fighting to make a place for yourself. You will fear that your life has no significance, and be easily threatened by others. You may cope by scaling back your expectations, and making a place that is small, but defensible - like when people curl up in a ball, hide behind something, or retreat to a corner.

- You will be restless and easily distracted by "greener grass"
- You will not be confident in your role
- You may often feel threatened by others who are secure
- You will shrink back from your God-given responsibilities
- You will overreact to criticism
- You may use "power plays" to defend your space
- You will feel a constant need to prove yourself

Personal application - Father Mapping





Session #2 – The Path of Change

How do we experience lasting transformation?

What freedom is not: (Gal 3:3)

1. Finding the reason “why”
2. Suppressing the past
3. Changing dad
4. Behavior management

Each of these solutions is like trying to solve the problem as an orphan (John 14:18).

A dead end path: Awareness

What freedom is: (John 14:6-23)

1. Letting Jesus lead us to the Father – 14:6
2. Coming to know the Father in an experiential way that leaves our soul “satisfied” – 14:7-8
3. Through Christ’s mercy and grace, entering into the SAME relationship that he has with the Father – 14:20-23

Yet many of us know this and still have a hard time getting there – John 14:9

A difficult path: Awareness --- Restoration

There is one more step between these two

Removing the barriers to freedom: (Mark 1:15)

You need to realize that what looks like a vacuum is actually filled with...

- a. Unforgiveness
- b. Sin
- c. Lies
- d. Idolatry
- e. Vows

(You can remember these by the acrostic – **US LIV** – he wants “us to live”)

This can cause God’s Father identity, love, pleasure and place to bounce off of our heart.

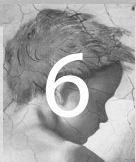


Illustration:



Many of these heart diseases are embedded in “defining moments” from our past.

With God’s power the disease can be removed. This is the step of “Cleansing”.

A transforming path: Awareness --- Cleansing ---- Restoration

“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.”

Psalm 51:5-6

“The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.”

Blaise Pascal

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know ...”

Ephesians 1:18

How do you discover what needs to be cleansed?

1. Identify one of the four areas that you want to make progress in (Identity, Love, Pleasure or Place). Ask the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to show you what you can’t see yourself. (John 14:16-18)
2. Since the five “heart diseases” are often embedded in defining moments from our past, ask the Counselor to remind you of the defining moments that relate to the area you are praying about. (John 14:25-27)
3. With the Spirit as your guide, walk back through the defining moment and ask him to show you if there is any Unforgiveness, Sin, Lies, Idolatry, or Vows that are blocking you from receiving from the Father. (John 16:7-15)
4. Cleanse these with prayers of repentance and faith, preferably out loud and with another person. (I John 1:2-9)





What does this cleansing look like?

US LIV

1. **Unforgiveness** – Matt 18:21-35
 - a. Notice the three signs of unforgiveness
 - i. Inappropriate emotion (anger, desire to hurt, justified aggression) Matt 18:28
 - ii. Demands for compensation (pay me back, you owe me, why aren't you...) Matt 18:28-29
 - iii. Jail keeping (I will lock you away, close you off, try to make my world safe from you, punish you, wall you off) Matt 18:30
 - b. Receive your resources – Matt 18:23-27, 32-35
 - c. Name the debt – Matt 18:23-24, 28
 - d. Pray - Releasing the debtor because the Father has forgiven you – Matt 18:33-35

2. **Sin** – both yours and sins committed against you – Isaiah 53
 - a. **Repentance** – turn from trying to fix it yourself, from thinking that you can or should be able to heal yourself.
 - b. **Faith** – take your sins, your wound, your pain, your rejection, your hurt, and the sin that was committed against you and place it on Christ. Leave it with him at the cross and ask him to take it to the grave – and then swallow and conquer death by his resurrection life.

3. **Lies** – John 8:44, 8:30-32
 - a. **Repentance** – name the lie and then turn from it. Reject and renounce it in the name of Jesus. Call it a lie, and refuse to continue to accept or believe it.
 - b. **Faith** – in faith receive the truth. Accept it as true for you, declaring your faith and belief in the truth, and your submission to it (James 1:21)

4. **Idolatry** – Isaiah 44,46


An idol – that which I regularly turn to for help, protection, comfort, sustenance, and security rather than to the Lord.

 - a. **Repentance** - recognize that your idol is a false god, something of your own creation that is unable to truly help you. Repent of your idolatry, renounce it, and symbolically destroy it in the name of Christ.
 - b. **Faith** – declare your full submission to the only one and true God. Put him in the place once occupied by the idol and worship him.

5. **Vows** – Isaiah 30:1-26

Vows – inner promises made in times of difficulty or pain as a way to bring order and create a sense of protection and security. They are similar to Israel's covenant with Egypt when Jerusalem was under attack. Vows begin with the words "I will always..., I will never" or "You will always..., you will never..." For example - "I will always win," or "You will never hurt me again."



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- a. **Repentance** – recognize that your vow was “godless”, in that it promised to provide you protection and refuge apart from God. God said these vows “bring neither help nor advantage, but only shame and disgrace”, and called them a form of idolatry. Repent of your vow, renounce it, cancel it and break it in the name of Christ.
 - b. **Faith** – ask the Spirit to show you the words of the new vow you are to make – this one to the Lord. Replace your self-made protection with submission to and rest in his sufficiency. Do this with a new covenant of commitment and faith.

Personal application

1. Awareness

Look back at the “Father Map” you filled out at the end of the last session and summarize your key observations. What are the areas where you need to be “found by your Father”? Where are signs that there are vacuums or unhealed wounds? Where do you see distortions, pulls, self-protection and walls?

2. Cleansing

Ask the Spirit to bring to your mind key “defining moments” in relationship to one of the issues you wrote above. Let him remind you of the key data from that experience that is important for you to remember today. Write down a couple of words that summarize what he showed you.

Now ask the Spirit to show you if any of the five heart diseases are preventing you from experiencing all that the Father offers. With the Spirit as your guide, walk back through the defining moment and ask him to show you if there is any Unforgiveness, Sin, Lies, Idolatry or Vows that are blocking you from receiving from the Father. Write down a few notes on what he shows you.





Session #3 – Father Prayers

Review

What follow up questions do you have about the five heart diseases? Are there any of them you would like to hear more about?

What questions do you have about the role of the Holy Spirit as Counselor, or the place of “defining moments” in helping us understand what is going on below the surface?

Is there any more you would like to hear about nature of cleansing and the role of repentance and faith?

Remember the three steps – **Awareness, Cleansing, Restoration?** We are now heading into the third step of restoration, which actually begins as part of the cleansing process. But to understand this, we need to look at the two “Father Prayers” of Ephesians.

The Context

If you have put your trust in Christ you are....

- Blessed with every spiritual blessing (vs 3)
- Chosen (vs 4)
- Adopted to Sonship (vs 5)
- Redeemed (vs 7)
- Forgiven (vs 7)
- Included in Christ (vs 13)
- Sealed with the Spirit (vs 13)
- Guaranteed our inheritance (vs 14)

The first Father Prayer – Eph 1:15-19

(quotes below from the NIV)

For this reason

....remembering you in my prayers.

*I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **glorious Father***



may give you the Spirit

of wisdom

and revelation,

*so that you may **know him better.***

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened

in order that you may know

the hope to which he has called you,

the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

The Second Father Prayer – Eph 3:14-19

*For this reason I kneel before **the Father,**
from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may

strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

*so that Christ may **dwell in your hearts through faith.***

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

*may have **power,** together with all the Lord's holy people,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,*

*19 and to **know this love that surpasses knowledge—**
that you may be filled to the measure of **all the fullness of God.***





Application of the Father Prayers

When you are praying through a defining moment, or a particular area where you feel blocked in connecting with God's Father heart, ask him for...

1. **The Spirit of Wisdom** – a Spirit-energized ability to connect what you already know from Scripture about the Father to this particular situation.
2. **The Spirit of Revelation** – for God to supernaturally draw back the veil and reveal his Father presence and nature to you. This is more than just intellectual knowledge, since “the eyes of your heart” will need to be “enlightened”.
3. **Christ to dwell in your heart through faith** – for God to give you the power to see and experience his Father heart as he reveals it through his Son, who makes the Father known to us “in flesh”. (John 1:14,18)

Remember that this happens at the level of your Soul and Spirit (“strengthened in your inner being”), and involves all of who you are – spirit, mind, will and emotions.

Examples:

Personal Application

Up until now you have been mainly collecting information and understanding, but now you are ready to actually take the steps that lead to transformation. First of all you need to choose someone to do them with, as it will be much easier than working alone. This can be your husband or wife (if you are married), or a close friend or spiritual mentor.

Write down who this will be

Write down when you will meet with them (set aside a least two hours, so that you have plenty of time)



When you meet, you will do three things

1. Awareness –

- Talk about what you learned through the Father map and where you see symptoms of Father deficiency in your life.

2. Cleansing

- Choose one of these areas to work on. Ask the Counselor (the Holy Spirit) to reveal more about what has caused this deficiency in your life. Pray and ask him to reveal key defining moments that relate to this issue.
- Together with your partner, pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal if any of the five main heart diseases (Unforgiveness, Sin, Lies, Idolatry, Vows), are present and need to be cleansed. Stop and listen to what he says. Ask your partner to share their insights as well.
- In prayer, cleanse those with specific prayers of repentance and faith.

3. Restoration

- Ask the Father to give you a Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation so that you can know him better. Then allow him to point you to key passages of Scripture, remind you of what you have learned about him, or reveal something to you about his character. With your partner, share these insights and Scriptures.
- Ask the Father to reveal his Father heart to you through his Son Jesus, who puts him “in flesh”. Ask “how would the presence of Jesus or the Father change the defining moments that have shaped me?” Specifically ask “Where is he in that memory?” Ask him to “refather you”.
- Now go on to the next defining moment or issue he has show you and repeat the steps listed above (awareness, cleansing, restoration).

- Work these changes out into habit by studying more about the Father heart of God, and regularly reminding yourself of truth about how he sees you.





Session #4 – Better than you know

Let's begin with some review.

There are four streams of God's father heart, as seen in his perfect relationship with his Son. (Matt 3:17, 17:5, John 5)

1. Identity
2. Love
3. Pleasure
4. Place

These correlate with deep needs in our soul. Without these resources we will be "Father deficient". With them we will be "satisfied" (John 14:8).

By grace, through faith, Jesus invites us into the same relationship that he has with the Father. (John 14:19-20)

As we relate to God as Father, we are always impacted by what we experienced from our earthly fathers. We don't have another Jesus, we don't have another Holy Spirit, but we do have another father, and he tends to get in the way.

The path into the "Kingdom" always requires the same things from us – **"repentance and faith"** (Mark 1:15). This leads us through three steps – **awareness, cleansing** (from unforgiveness, sin, lies, idolatry, vows), and **restoration**.

Coming to know your heavenly Father is a lifelong journey, because HE is so much better than anything else you have ever known.

1. Identity



2. Love



3. Pleasure

4. Place

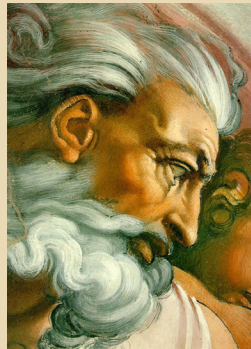
Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Eph 3:20-21









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