



WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDE

October 16, 2022

Week 3 God Our Father

Knowing the ONE who knows you the best!

Welcome to our Discussion Guide - designed to help you think more deeply about the sermon topic as you engage with others through thoughtful conversation, biblical exploration and real-life application.

➤ KEY PASSAGES

Luke 15:11-32, Matthew 6:9-13

➤ CONVERSATION STARTER

What is the best memory you have of your dad or an important father figure?

➤ QUICK REVIEW

This week we focus on the most familiar and recognizable name for God, it is "God our Father." Understanding and experiencing God in this way helps shape how we see ourselves, how we know we are loved, and helps us develop healthy confidence.

➤ EXPLORATION

Before we look more deeply into this topic, it is important to expose some of the potentially negative connotations we might have about God as

a father from the experiences we have had with our own father.

False Narratives that keep us from knowing and experiencing God fully.

- **God as an angry judge** - primarily focused on all my mistakes and shortcomings.
- **God as a push-over** - approving of everything we do, allowing us to act like spoiled children.
- **God as distant and distracted** - disconnected and uninterested in us.

All three of these false narratives are harmful and can influence how we see God as our Heavenly Father.

How would you respond to a person who says, "I have trouble calling God 'Father' because my biological father was not very good"?

Examples of God the Father in the Old Testament:

- Deuteronomy 1:31 - a father carries a son
- Isaiah 1:2 - raises children
- Jeremiah 31:20 - a heart of compassion
- Hosea 11:1 - loving his child

The word "Father" carries a lot of relational symbolism. We need to be mindful of our assumptions around what it means to be "Father God". A fully developed understanding of God the

Father must also include the broader idea of “parental love” that may challenge our stereotypes of fatherhood. Some examples include:

- Hosea 11:3-4 - lifting infants and bending down to feed them
- Hosea 13:8 - Mother Bear protect cubs
- Duet. 32:11-12 - Mother Eagle
- Isaiah 66:13 - A comforting mother
- Isaiah 49:15 - A nursing mother

Jesus Relates to God as Father

In the Old Testament, God is often portrayed more as the “Father of the Nation of Israel” than of individuals. In the New Testament, the descriptions of God are much more personal. Jesus refers to God as “Father” over 165 times. We will look at 2 key examples from Jesus’ teaching.

Read the following passage out loud and pay close attention to the actions and attitudes of the father, the son and the older brother.

Luke 15:11-32

Imagine yourself in this scene, what would you be feeling and thinking?

With which character do you most closely relate? Father, Son, Older Brother? Why?

This parable is often referred to as “The Prodigal Son.” The word “Prodigal” means “recklessly extravagant.” We see in the story that the son was reckless in the way he spent his inheritance, but we also see that the father was extravagant in his expression of love when the son returned. The father was also extravagant in his response to the complaint of the older brother.

Think about a time when you have experienced the extravagant love of God, what was that like for you?

Isn’t it amazing that our Heavenly Father knows us and loves us. We don’t have to get cleaned up or

change before we can receive God’s love. We simply receive God’s love. It is a gift that God freely gives us!

Matthew 6:9-13

We learn a lot about the nature of God from this familiar prayer. Jesus begins by acknowledging God as his “Father in Heaven” and gives him praise before asking for anything. In the book, The Good and Beautiful God, author James Bryan Smith outlines 6 important attributes of God:

Nature of God our Father from the Lord’s Prayer

- *Present*
- *Pure*
- *Powerful*
- *Provides*
- *Pardons*
- *Protects*

Which of these attributes do you desire to experience in your life right now?

Which of these attributes is hardest for you to receive from God? Why do you think that might be?

➤ TAKE AWAY

We have learned that God loves us unconditionally and always wants the best for us. We can always trust him, even when we don’t always understand what is happening in our immediate circumstances.

Take some time to pray for each other. Remember to thank God for being a Loving Father.