

What God is Really Like

WHAT GOD IS REALLY LIKE, PT 1: GOD AS FATHER

The term “father” stirs up a variety of feelings and memories in all of us. For some of us, our fathers were a dominant presence in our homes. For others, our fathers were people we barely saw. For still others, our fathers were consistent providers, but cold when it came to showing genuine love. So, when we hear the term “heavenly Father,” what feelings bubble up? In one story, Jesus gives us a perfect picture of who our heavenly Father truly is.

BIG IDEA: It’s hard to get life right when you’ve got God wrong.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Growing up, did you ever want to run away from home or school? What prompted you to consider that? Did you actually follow through?
2. Why do we sometimes want to flee certain situations in life?
3. In the message, Carlo said, “It’s tough to get life right when we get God wrong.”
 - Do you find this to be true? Why or why not?
 - What do you feel is more important: what we think about God or what God thinks about us?
4. When you think of the word “father,” what words come to mind? Do you think these words are influenced by your experience with your earthly father?
5. *With your Bible or Bible App, read Luke 15:11-32.* How would you describe the father in this story?

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: “A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, ‘I want my share of your estate now before you die.’ So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, “Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.”’ “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began. “Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your

brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.' "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!' "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!' "

-Luke 15:11-32 (NLT)

6. How would you describe the father in this story?
7. If you were to fully embrace these words to describe your heavenly Father, how would it impact your relationship with him?

CHANGING YOUR MIND

God wants us to see him as the perfect Father who loves us unconditionally. He is the perfection of what our earthly father could never be. When you think of the words that describe the father in the story Jesus told, let them shape how you would describe your heavenly Father. This week, would you be willing to think about God as your Father?

