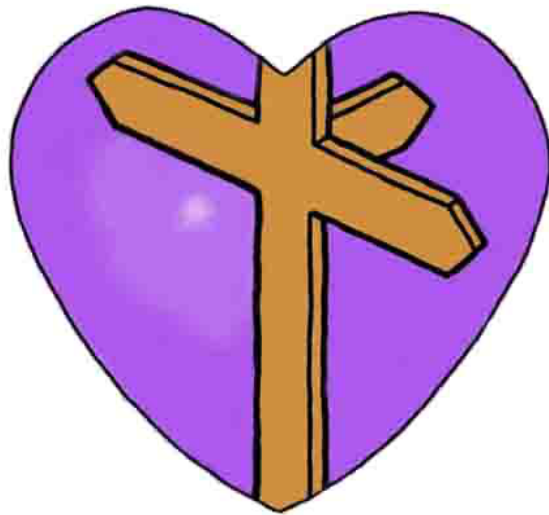


# Going Deeper



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## **Going Deeper - Introduction**

Our lives are constantly bombarded with facts and information. We have mobile phones, 24 hour News channels, the internet, numerous radio stations not to mention books, magazines or newspapers! Information is thrust upon us whether we like it or not!

We inevitably have to process some of this information. We have to deal with the facts that are put before us. Some of them may change or influence the way we think or feel. Our opinions may be formed, our attitudes challenged or shaped, but with all this information, with all these facts - is our heart changed?

Finding the Father and experiencing His love is not about acquiring more knowledge or being given more information. It is all about coming into a relationship with God and allowing our hearts to be changed by His love.

These notes may help you with your own journey or could be used to assist a group study. I hope they are inspirational rather than theoretical and that they help you discover the heart of a loving Father who wants to reveal Himself to you!

The notes deliberately exclude a lot of detail - that is for you to discover as you journey towards the heart of God. I have included a number of Scripture references so you can trace the chorus of the Father's love through the Bible. As you seek, I ask you to open your heart to receive what the Father wants to do in you. The gaining of knowledge and the understanding of the concepts will not change your heart; as the revelation of Father's love soaks into you then you will be changed!

May the Spirit of revelation open the eyes of your heart and may your life be touched with the Father's love.



## God Has Always Been Father

### In the beginning

John 1:1-8, 10-14

John 17:20-26

1 John 4:8

'In the beginning' God was in intimate relationship with the Son and the Holy Spirit. They were complete in themselves. God did not need creation as an object to love because in Himself love just happens - God is love! He does not represent love - it is who He is. It is His very nature. Whatever God does He does out of love, for love and through love.

John 17:24-26. Jesus came to introduce us to this love.

### Rebellion in Heaven

Is 14:7-15

Ez 28:1-19

The story of Job

Satan was expelled from Heaven, sent from the Father's presence - he feels the full wrath of God's righteous anger. Satan wanted God's position for himself. Satan does not want God to be loving - he calls God's heart into question. Is He a God of love or is He a God of control and manipulation?

### The second 'in the beginning'

Man was created in the image of God, made in perfection to model His glory. Satan watched to see how we would be formed - would we be made to obey God without choice or would we be given the free choice to love God from our heart? Satan could not prove that God's heart was bad. Satan saw that God made us in love and for love and so he attacked the jewel of creation.

What would God do when man disobeyed Him and walked his own way? Would He destroy us completely? No, He held out a way for us to return. One day there would be a way back into relationship. Our period of suffering was limited.

### An act of love

Gen 3:22-24

We were driven from the garden so we would not be able to eat from the tree of life and therefore live for ever. Man had entered into a state of separation from God, but in His love, death entered the human race so that we would not live in a state of sin forever - our suffering is finite.

### The Father's cry

Deut 32:5-6

Psalm 68:5

Isaiah 1:2

Jeremiah 3:19

God is by nature a Father and He keeps revealing Himself to us. He wants a family. Our sin makes it impossible for us to be reconciled to Him. He found a way for our sin to be dealt with so we could be united to Him again.

### The Father's answer

John 3:16

There is hope again for mankind.

Jesus came to reveal the Father and to show us the way back to Him.



## God's nature

In the Old Testament God's nature is revealed by His many names.

Elohim - Supreme God - Gen 1:1, Num 23:19, Ps 19:1

Yahweh - Lord God - Gen 2:4, Ex 6:2-3

El Elyon - God Most High - Gen 14:17, Ps 7:17, Is 14:13-14

El Roi - God who sees - Gen 16:13

El Shaddai - God Almighty - Gen 17:1, Ps 19:1

Yahweh Yoreh - God provides - Gen 22:13-14

Yahweh Nissi - God is my banner - Ex 17:15

Yahweh Shalom - God is peace - Jud 6:24

Yahweh Sabaoth - Lord of hosts - 1 Sam 1:3, Is 6:1-3

El Olam - Everlasting God - Is 40:28-31

Yahweh Shammah - The Lord is there - Ez 48:35

Jesus revealed the nature of God in one word - FATHER. The whole nature of God was summed up in this word. Jesus showed us, through his relationship with God, that He was a father. The names of God in the Old Testament were all summed up and fulfilled in that one word - FATHER. The nature of God was completely expressed through the life and example of Jesus.

John 1:12

John 1:14

John 5:19

John 5:30

Matt 11:27

Jesus taught us to pray 'our Father' - 'daddy'.

## What is Father like?

Heb 1:3 Look at Jesus - He is the exact representation of the Father.

Ex 34:6-7 The nature of God: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin!

1 Cor 13 Love is.... God is....

Gal 5

Gal 4:6-7 We are sons and heirs.

Jesus met people in their need. He knows what will satisfy our deepest needs. He appeals to our hearts. His yoke is not heavy and He will bring us into a place of rest. He does not deal with superficial issues, but in love, reveals the Father's heart of grace and mercy.

## Finding Father

1 Cor 8:6 There is but one God the Father!

John 4:21-24 True worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

The revelation of Father's love goes beyond our understanding; it goes into our hearts and changes everything.

John 16:23 We have direct access to Father.

Heb 10: 19-25 We can enter the Holy place, the Father's presence.

We can come into intimate relationship with the Father. Our inheritance is available for us now. We can walk with Him as sons and daughters.

John 14:3-4

John 14:23



## Going Deeper

### Pleasing Father

If we love Him - we will obey Him. Love comes first, obedience comes second! (John 14 - three times!)

The gap between our desire and our ability has to be bridged. This can only happen through the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit we know the love of the Father. We receive healing and cleansing and we learn to walk in freedom as His sons.

### He is our Father

**Acts 17:26**, God is the one who established our times and places.

**Jer 1:4-5, Ps 139:16** He made us before time and knew all about us

Heb 12:9 – He is the Father of our spirit. He conceived us way back in time. Body and soul from natural parents, but spirit from Him.

He is a father, HE IS OUR FATHER!

### What does this mean?

We will know perfect love. Eph 3:16-19 "rooted and grounded in love".

We will be protected from the power of the evil one (John 17:11).

We will become one just as the Father and Son are one (John 17:20-21).

The world will know the Father (John 17:23).

GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN FATHER AND HE WANTS TO BE A FATHER TO YOU  
(2 Cor 6:18)



## Redeeming the Orphan Heart

### God's original intention

Made for His pleasure

Revelation 4:11 (NLT) Everything God made was for His pleasure.

Colossians 1:16 All things were created by Him and for Him.

Isaiah 43:1-7 We were created for His glory. He formed us, we are His!

God wanted a family. He walked with Adam and Eve in the garden and His desire is to walk with us too. He enjoyed their company and wants to enjoy friendship with us as well!

Made in the image of His son

Romans 8:28-29 We are predestined to the likeness of His son. Not only are we made in Jesus' likeness but we can also share his inheritance and the intimate relationship he has with the Father.

2 Corinthians 3:18 being transformed into His likeness.

Enjoy the unity of the Trinity

The love within the Trinity is complete. Nothing is missing. This love and unity was meant to be shared with us! John 17:25-26

We were made by God

Genesis 1 All of creation except man was spoken into being. God's word went forth and creation happened. Yet God knelt down on His knees and formed man out of the dust of the earth - He then breathed life into him. An intimate act! This demonstrates that God intended a close relationship with this part of His creation.

Genesis 2:7 "God formed man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The man came alive - a living soul" (The Message). God also formed Adam's wife. Adam was called the son of God - Luke 3:38.

His life came into us and gave us our life. We worked alongside God. We became his children.

### We have an adversary

Someone is against us. Our enemy hates the glory of God that is hidden in our hearts. He has tried to trap and destroy God's son - Adam (and failed) - we are the target now!

Isaiah 14:7-15

Ezekiel 28:1-9

Satan stood against God - the five "I wills" (Isaiah)

I will ascend to Heaven.

I will raise my throne above God's.

I will sit enthroned on the mount of the assembly.

I will ascend to the top of the clouds.

I will make myself like the Most High.

He did not want equality with God; Satan wanted God's place for himself.

Satan was thrown out of Heaven and then went after the next best thing - God's kids!



## The fall from God's intention

Genesis 3 We were tricked! "Did God really say?"

God gave Adam and Eve permission to eat from every tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They could eat of the tree of life - but there is no indication that they did!

Genesis 3:6 Adam was there as well! But yet he turns and blames Eve!

## The Orphan Spirit

This led to separation from God. For the first time in their lives Adam and Eve feel shame - the sense of desolation and separation from God. They chose independence from God – instantly they became aware of their nakedness, their weakness and vulnerability. Became aware of humanity.

They clothe themselves - a basic covering to hide their shame. Yet God comes along and with compassion clothes them properly. (Genesis 3:7 and Genesis 3:21)

Adam and Eve receive separate identities - Woman is named 'Eve' whereas before this separation they were both known as Adam.

Genesis 5:1-3 Although Adam was made in the 'likeness of God', his own children were made in 'his' image as well - so we have taken on the fallen, separated nature of Adam. So they, and in turn us, were separated from God – Isaiah 59:2.

We started to walk in the ways of this world Ephesians 2:1-3.

Our separation from God leads to the same expression of emptiness and alone-ness, walking our own way without God. Gen 4:10-14 – Cain wandered the earth restlessly – ultimate orphan!

Restlessness = "something more I have to do to feel loved, valued or affirmed."

Lamentations 5:1-9 The character and nature of an orphan.

Galatians 5:1 Not only has an orphan spirit fallen on us but also one of slavery.

### Slaves

A slave belongs to another with no rights or freedom of his own. He is owned and is accountable to another. A slave lives for the law, lives by the law and often makes up the law to feel secure. Everything he does is for another.

### Orphans

An orphan has no name, no family, no rights, no inheritance. An orphan has to succeed on his own, make his own way and make a name for himself. An orphan strives to gain approval and acceptance. There are many spiritual orphans in the church.

Driven from the garden – an act of love

Not an act of judgement - was done to protect us!

But Isaiah 9:6 – God is the eternal Father

John 14:18 – I will not leave you as orphans – in God's heart as He drove them out.

## Thankfully we are not left like this...

God promised to become a 'father to the fatherless' (Psalms 68:5)

One of God's names is 'Redeemer' = to regain possession of something through a payment.

Redemption has won us the right to be called sons of God (Galatians 4:6-7 and Romans 8:15-16).

We can now cry Abba - 'Father' or 'Daddy'.





God is restoring His original intention to the church today so that there are many sons and daughters liberated by the power of the Spirit, who are able to carry His name and love to a hurting, loveless, fatherless generation.

As we abide in Him (John 15), live in love (1 John 4:16) and walk in love (2 John v6) then the emptiness of our hearts will be satisfied and we will become more like Jesus.

### **Promise of restoration**

A promise: Malachi 4:5-6. Elijah will come and turn hearts back to the Father. Elijah = John the Baptist, came as a forerunner to Jesus. His message of repentance was to turn people back to the Father. To make them ready for Jesus who was the Way to Father.

### **The Cross - second act of love**

The cross puts an end to our fallen state. Crucifixion was the worst possible death, Roman soldiers represent us and all the worst of our fallen humanity. God let out of the temple to live in our hearts as he always intended. Our broken heart can be healed and our relationship with the Father restored. Redemption - to buy back what was once owned - how much it cost Father! We can now taste of the tree of life and live!

### **God is love**

1 John 4:1-8 God is LOVE. The complete expression of love is to be found in a person. He is not a substitute nor a counterfeit but the real thing!

Love is not one of God's attributes, it is His very nature. Everything He does is in love, with love and for love.

### **Our search for love**

We all need unconditional love

Jeremiah 31:3 Loved with an everlasting love and drawn us with kindness. Not for what we do nor for what we achieve but for who we are.

SO YOU SHOULD NOT BE LIKE COWERING, FEARFUL SLAVES. YOU SHOULD BEHAVE INSTEAD LIKE GOD'S VERY OWN CHILDREN, ADOPTED INTO HIS FAMILY - CALLING HIM "FATHER, DEAR FATHER".  
FOR HIS HOLY SPIRIT TELLS US WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN Rom 8:15-16 (NLT)



## Hindrances to Knowing God as Father

### Different Father Types

#### Good Fathers

God's plan – being a model of His heart

A good father by the world's standards – encouraging, providing, caring – but still not perfect!

Sometimes a good father prevents us coming to God as Father.

View of God – No need for His love because my father was good

#### Performance Oriented Father

Place harsh demands for perfection and obedience at all costs

High performance, love only expressed when you hit the target. Love is therefore conditional. Feel shame when you fail.

View of God – demanding, strings attached, shame based.

#### Passive Father

No great demands on children. Does not demonstrate love and affection. Good providers but a low level of involvement. Physically present but emotionally uninvolved.

View of God – God is there but He is uninvolved.

#### Absentee Father

No longer present at home (death, divorce, work or abandonment)

50% of children grow up in single parent families.

Struggle with abandonment. Blame themselves for absence.

View of God – Ready to abandon us at any time. He does not leave us as orphans!

#### Authoritarian Father

More interested in law rather than love. Stern, unquestioned obedience. No emotional relationship, rules with fear and intimidation.

View of God – Legalistic, disciplinarian, obedience as a result of fear.

#### Abusive Father

Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual. Leads to anger and fear. Hidden guilt, fear and shame. Distrust authority figures (eg pastors).

View of God – Angry at Him, unable to trust, lack of intimacy.

### Ten Specific Hindrances

Hebrew 12:1 – “throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us”

#### Hidden Sin

Our sin has been dealt with at the cross – the cause of the separation from God has been removed.

Power of the cross is enough – it will/can cleanse us and allow us to walk in intimacy with God. 1 John 1:9 confess our sin and He will forgive us.

Live as children of the light – 1 John 1:7 walk in the light. Eph 5:8-10 – walk as children of the light. Short accounts and transparency!



### Legalism

Our own effort and ability. We can not live a life for God in our own effort and self righteousness. Our own righteousness is like filthy rags and leads to independence rather than total dependence on Him.

Father's love is a message of grace Eph 2:8-9. By grace we are saved. We can not do anything to make God love us anymore than He does right now!

### Fear of Rejection

We fear abandonment, fear leads to mistrust and mistrust leads to unhealthy relationships. Fear paralyses!

Psalm 27:10 "though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me" The love of God is so high, deep, wide and long that we can not escape it. Eph 3:14-19. This is a major area where the wrong voice can speak to our heart. The truth is we are secure in Him.

### Pride

God resists the proud (James 4:6) Pride is our desire to be self sufficient and live a life without God. Jesus was totally dependent on his Father – for everything.

Humble ourselves and come as little children. Dependence and vulnerability.

### Unbelief

Hebrews 11:6 – without faith can't please God. What He offers is too good to be true – it flows out of His extravagant love!. Our limited understanding of love can stop us believing the truth – we are limited.

Childlike simplicity and faith.

### Shame

No shame before the fall. Shame causes us to hide from God and to cover ourselves – takes away the intimacy! Feel shame from parents, teachers, pastors, family.

He approves of us – Isaiah 61:7 instead of shame receive a double portion. Romans 10.11 trust in Him, never put to shame!

### Rejecting the Parents God Gave Us

Honouring parents brings a blessing. Walking in right relationship with earthly parents makes it easier to walk with Heavenly Father. Jesus was always a true son, in his heart – to Mary & Joseph, to spiritual fathers (son of David) and to Father God.

### Deception

John 10:10 – the thief comes to kill, steal and destroy. Satan is constantly lying about the character and nature of God. He wants us to believe that God is distant and angry and demands harsh service from us. God of this age blinded the hearts of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:3-4)

John 8:32 – the truth sets us free. Jesus is the way, the truth and life – he shows us what the Father is really like. He shows us the extravagant love of the Father.



## *Going Deeper*

### Unforgiveness

Bitterness a poison pill we swallow thinking it will kill someone else! (Jack Winter)

Matthew 18:21-35 forgive others if we want to be forgiven by God. Release those who have offended you. Ask God for compassion for the person who has wounded you and for grace to be able to release them from the debt they owe you. Pray a blessing on them!

### A Divided Heart

Can't serve two masters! Greatest commandment to love God with ALL heart, mind and soul.

He is worthy of ALL our love. He withheld nothing from us. He is jealous for our total love.



## Forgiveness

"If you, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are to be feared" Psalm 130:3-4

Releasing or controlling?  
Someone who can forgive has power.

The act of forgiveness is powerful, it unlocks something, sets people free and releases them. Someone who can forgive is held in awe, reverence and is 'feared'.

The Message says: "Forgiveness is your habit, that's why you're worshipped".

The Psalmist knows that forgiveness is powerful and therefore he is willing to wait and put his hope in the Lord. He waits knowing that God's forgiveness is completely liberating.

But we can associate forgiveness with control and manipulation. A controlling fear that holds us bound until we fulfill certain requirements - when we have paid the debt to the person we wronged then, and only then, will they let us off. That is not forgiveness but is manipulative. It means there is a wrong hold over our lives which is not liberating but holds us in bondage.

Forgiveness brings redemption  
Psalm 130:7 God's forgiveness brings full redemption. Generous redemption. True forgiveness comes from a heart of love to release and no longer hold someone in bondage. True forgiveness comes out of love.

When we forgive we will also see full redemption; we, too find freedom.

Forgive as you have been forgiven  
Colossians 3:13 "Forgive as the Lord forgave you"

Matthew 6:14-15 "For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

Of course God has forgiven us! But if we can't forgive others then part of our heart is closed. If part of our heart is closed then we question the Father's ability to totally forgive us. We see it as manipulative and controlling rather than being releasing. As we forgive then our hearts become open and we can receive and experience the Father's forgiveness.

God is all about family  
The Trinity is a family system made up of a Father, a Son, and a Spirit. While the title 'Creator' describes what God does, 'Father' is who He is.

Ephesians 3:14-15 For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

John 14:1-3 In My Father's house are many rooms.

God's plan for us was that we should live in an environment of perfect love. Not being able to experience pain or rejection. Our mothers: love, nurture, comfort and gentleness. Our fathers: name, identity, our place in the world, protection and provision. We were made to love and to be loved. (Mexico and New York hospitals)

Isaiah 66:13 As a mother comforts her child, I will comfort you.  
Psalm 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion



## Going Deeper

But the fall changed everything. Hurting parents can only pass onto their children what they themselves have received.

Martin Luther

"I have difficulty praying the Lord's Prayer because whenever I say 'Our Father', I think of my own father who was hard, unyielding and relentless. I cannot help but think of God in that way".

Forgiveness from the heart

**Matthew 18:21-35**

Jesus' response to Peter's question - how often should I forgive?

In this story look at yourself as the king rather than the servant.

The King has had something taken from him and there was no way it could ever be repaid. It was an impossible task even for the servant to think about repaying the debt.

But before the king could cancel the debt he had to know how much had been taken, he counted the cost and then wrote it off. He could only cancel it once he knew what it was costing him. (Credit card analogy)

In the same way, we have to know what has been taken (stolen) from us. We can only forgive when we see what has been lost; if something is stolen and you can't identify it then you can't forgive for that particular thing.

Cancel the debt - no chance of repayment, let it go, no control or manipulation. That debt no longer belongs to you, it is written out of your ledger, no longer exists. (If something comes back in the future then that is a complete bonus.)

Forgiving like this brings freedom and "full redemption".

At the end of the story Jesus talks about forgiving from the heart. When we forgive from the heart it is complete and allows our hearts to enter a greater level of freedom.

With the Father's help we need to draw up a list of the things that have been stolen from us. We can then face them and with his grace we can begin to cancel them. Quite often these things will involve our parents and the way we have been treated. But it is not limited to parents - it could be brothers or sisters, friends, teachers, colleagues, bosses even leaders in the church. It may mean facing painful things and letting them surface in order that they can be cancelled and to enable God to heal our heart.

Forgiveness is a process - we forgive as we are able at that particular time. If the issue surfaces again then we may need to forgive again.

(It's better to have relationship rather than being right - what level of relationship is it right to settle for?)

Jack Winter quote

"Bitterness is a poison pill that we swallow thinking it will kill someone else."

As long as we have unforgiveness in our heart, we have an unhealthy connection with the person who hurt us. The only way that we can be free from this is to cancel the debt completely and forgive from our heart.



## Our Journey Home to Love

### Our need for love

Our lives are a journey. In fact there may be two journeys that are intertwined.

We devote our time and energy to what we do, what we achieve, what we want to become. This is the external journey, the one everybody sees - our work, our play, even our church life. On this journey we ask an important question - "Who am I?"

Then there is the second journey, perhaps more important but not so clearly seen or understood. This is the internal journey of our hearts, the place we can hear the voice of the One who gave everything for us, the voice of One who woos us into an intimate relationship. On this journey we also ask the question "Who am I?".

Each journey has the same question but the answer is very different. The answer to the external journey will not satisfy the deep longing of our hearts. We will never be able to hit the mark. We may have answers for a while but then the satisfaction drains away, leaving us searching once more.

We have to pursue the internal journey of our heart because it is only then that we find the love and security that we have been searching for.

### God is love

1 John 4:1-8 God is LOVE. The complete expression of love is to be found in a person. He is not a substitute nor a counterfeit but the real thing!

Love is not one of God's attributes but it is His very nature. Everything He does is in love, with love and for love.

Love explains...

Why God creates - He creates people to love.

Why God cares - because of His love He cares for sinful people.

Why we are free to choose - He wants a loving response from us.

Why Jesus died - His love found a solution for our sin.

Why we receive eternal life - God's love never ends.

Live in love

1 John 4:16

We live in Him (John 15) and He makes His home with us. (John 14:23)

How God shows His love

Demonstrated most clearly through Jesus - John 3:16

But also demonstrated in many practical ways:

Zeph 3:17 - mighty to save, delights in us, rejoices over us with singing.

Is 40:11 - cares for us like a shepherd cares for his flock.

Rev 21:3-4 - comes to live with us, wipes the tears away from our eyes.

Ps 34:18 - close to the brokenhearted.

Ps 139:13 - created us in our mother's womb.

2 Thes 2:16 - encourages us.

Ps 139:17 - He thinks about us!



## Four types of love

Agape

Rom 5:8

John 3:16

God's love is unconditional. It is freely given because God wants His family back. It is covenantal, permanent and flawless. There is nothing we can do to earn or win God's love. Nothing can be added or taken from God's love - it is complete!

Eros

The intimacy of a lover and His bride. Examples - Song of Songs, the Bride in Revelation. Society has distorted the true meaning of eros. It has led us to believe that sex will fulfil our every need for love. We look to eros to become a substitute for other loves but find that it does not satisfy our needs.

Phileo

Natural affection and kindness. The love of a friend, brother, caring neighbour. This was the way that Jesus loved Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Storge

Family love, the love of a mother. Tenderness, provision of warmth or food. Comfort - imparted through touch, eye contact and tone of voice. If we do not receive this love in our childhood then there is a hole deep within us that needs to be filled. We often try to fill this hole with things that do not satisfy. Instead the Father wants to fill it with His love.

## Our search for love

We all need unconditional love

Jer 31:3 Loved with an everlasting love. Not for what we do nor for what we achieve but for who we are.

We need to feel safe

Ps 61:1-4

Ps 32:7

Ps 27:1

We need encouragement and affirmation

Children need lots of praise to counteract criticism.

Boys need to know their dads are proud of them.

Girls need to know they are beautiful.

Col 2:2 'encouraged in heart and united in love'

A sense of meaning and purpose

Jer 29:11 God has plans for us!

## God satisfies our need for love

God wants to satisfy our need for love. In fact, He is the only one who will completely satisfy the needs and desires of our hearts.

We look for love (agape, eros, phileo and storge) because we need it! God will express His love to us in these four ways because HE IS LOVE.

He will love us with His 'agape' foundational, unconditional love.

He desires to woo us into an intimate 'eros' relationship.

He will express His 'phileo' kindness and affection to us.

He will nurture, care and provide the 'storge' love we all need.





Rom 5:5 We are filled with His love by the Holy Spirit.

1 John 4:16 We live in love, not as casual visitors, but at home with love.

2 John 1:6 We walk in love.

Eph 3:16-19 We are to become rooted and grounded in love.

To have our love deficit filled, we need to keep running to Father and not to people or things. Only He will truly satisfy.

### **When we have it - we can give it**

We need love yet we also have the ability to love.

If we live in the external journey of our lives we will only be able to love from a very limited reservoir - it will not meet people's needs. It will not help them answer the main question of life.

When we live in the internal journey of our hearts and have found the Father's love for ourselves we will have something to give to others.

### **How do we get it?**

We can't strive or work for it. It is a gift of grace.

To start the journey we have to let go of 'oughts' and 'duty' and start living out of desire. Jesus showed us the way: coming like a little child, humbling ourselves, letting go of our pride and independence.

We can stop pursuing the external journey centered around self and pursue the internal journey centered on the Person who is Love.

Mat 11:28 A journey of rest in Him.

Along the way many things will try to stop us receiving the Father's love. We may need to move through pain and ask Father to heal us.

God, the Father, is waiting to lavish His perfect love on you!

**HOW GREAT IS THE LOVE THAT THE FATHER HAS LAVISHED ON US, THAT WE SHOULD BE CALLED CHILDREN OF GOD! AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE!**

1 John 3:1 (NIV)



## I Will Be A Father To You

Generally we are born into a safe environment. Children are carefree, contained in their own world with the pressures of life far removed from them. As we grow we learn that everything is not so perfect and we build walls around us to protect us. We make our own rules about who we can trust. We develop gifts and abilities which can lead us to doing things and living life in our own strength without reference to God. We move from dependence to independence and we learn to rely on our own strength!

Adam was created as an adult in an atmosphere of perfect love, fully dependent on God. The simplicity of that relationship has been lost but the joy is: it is ours to regain.

### The Father's cry

Deut 32:5-6

Psalm 68:5

Isaiah 1:2

Isaiah 43:1-7

Jeremiah 3:19

God is by nature a Father and He keeps revealing Himself to us. He wants a family. Our sin makes it impossible for us to be reconciled to Him. He found a way for our sin to be dealt with so we could be united to Him again.

### God's heart

2 Cor 6:17-18 Come out from the ways of the world and become the sons and daughters that God intended. We can have the relationship with God that we were made for!

Is 43:6 The sons of God collected from the four corners of the earth.

### Fatherhood is personal

God does not want to be distant. He is not afar off and does not wave a big stick of judgment. Our experience of our own fathers can affect how we view God. Even a good father is limited by human weaknesses and inadequacies. God is not just 'Father of creation' or 'Father of all'. He is interested in a personal and intimate relationship with YOU.

Misconceptions about fatherhood:

- Fathering is a single sexual/physical act.
- A father is absent either because he is not there or is too busy to be involved.
- Fathering means domination, control, manipulation or anger.

The Bible talks about something different.

Is 63:16

Jer 3:19

2 Cor 6:18

Two words could change our understanding about the Father heart of God - He wants to be a Father TO YOU. That is personal!



## **Fatherhood is active and ongoing**

Fathering is not a single act but an ongoing, lifelong process. We walk with our children and teach them about life. We help them when they are stuck, we offer advice and encouragement - we don't leave them to their own devices.

So it is with God! He wants to be a father to us in an active and ongoing way, on a day to day basis. We are not left to muddle on in our own strength. He calls us into the shelter of His wings to protect us, care for us, nurture us and lead us in His ways.

## **When fatherhood is not there...**

Without a father we are orphans. A fatherless child has no name, no identity, no rights and no inheritance. He has to carve out an existence and identity for himself. An orphan has to succeed on his own, make his own way in life, fend for himself and gain approval through his own actions.

In all of us there may be many orphan ways. In the church there are many spiritual orphans; people who strive and who fight to retain what they have built up.

God is a father and He does not want us to be orphans. He wants to father us! An orphan heart is an empty heart and our Father wants to fill that emptiness with His love and bring us back home. Satan was removed from the Father's presence and became the ultimate orphan. Since then he has tried to infect us all with that orphan spirit.

## **I will not leave you as orphans**

John 14:18 We are no longer orphans. Through our reconciliation with the Father, the emptiness of our hearts can be dealt with. We can again enjoy the intimacy and closeness of relationship that Adam and Eve first enjoyed. We can become a son like Jesus and an heir to the promises of scripture. Our lonely walk can be brought to an end and we can enjoy the freedom of being a son or daughter of our Heavenly Father.

This is what John 3:16 is all about.

God wants to reveal Himself to us as 'Father' and He wants to be a Father to us, day by day, in an ongoing, vital, life-giving and life-changing relationship.

A son is not like an orphan: a son has rights, an inheritance and a place in the family. A son knows that he is loved for who he is. This is a free gift, not earned because of what we do but given to us because of who we are.

## **Rooted and established in love**

Eph 3:14-19

- We have a name that comes from the Father.
- God has unlimited riches and resources. We can therefore afford to be generous.
- We are strengthened in our inner being by the Spirit living in us - opposite of despair.
- We have power from the Holy Spirit.
- Rooted and established in love - a strong connection to the magnitude of God's love.



## *Going Deeper*

- Understand the width, length, height and depth of God's love:
- Width - the complete breadth of our experience, reaches the whole world.
- Length - our lives and into eternity.
- Heights - the heights of celebration and elation.
- Depth - the depths of discouragement, despair - we are never lost to God's love.

We can be so filled with this love that Jesus and the Father are seen in us.

This is what it means for God to be a Father TO US.

"I WILL BE A FATHER TO YOU AND YOU WILL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS"  
2 Cor 6:18 (NIV)



## The Story of the Lost Sons

Luke 15:11-32

The story told by Jesus about two sons who are part of their father's household.  
It is a story about our hearts and the desire God has for relationship.  
It is the story about our Father's extravagant love.

### The younger son (rebellion)

He wanted his inheritance. He took it to go off and satisfy his own desires.  
He valued his rights more than the blessings of relationship.  
Under the law he could have been stoned for such rebellion but the father gave him his share of the inheritance.  
In his heart he had stopped being his father's son and took control of his own life.  
After a while the money ran out and eventually his 'gimme' attitude turned into 'change me'.  
He decided to go back home and seek forgiveness.  
THE FATHER RAN OUT TO MEET HIM!

### The older son (religion)

He too received his inheritance.  
He continued to work on the farm and when his brother returned he was very angry!  
The apparent injustice poured out - "I've always worked hard for you, you've never given me anything!"  
He was more concerned with fairness and being right than with relationship.  
THE FATHER CAME OUT TO MEET HIM!

### The father (relationship)

The father could have withheld the inheritance from the younger son. He could have kept him at home - but would he have kept his heart?  
He let him go but we know he watched and waited until the day his son returned.  
He had a robe waiting to cover his son's filth and shame - cf Gen 3:21.  
He had a ring to give to his son - giving him back the family's authority.  
He never stopped being a father.  
Unconditional love was ready to welcome the son back into the family.

Our Heavenly Father demonstrates unconditional love and is always ready to come out and meet us!  
The father in the story was lavish, extravagant and almost irresponsible with his love - just like our Heavenly Father!

### The sons were slaves

The younger son was a slave to sin. In his heart, though, he knew he needed to come home. He needed to come back to the father and ask forgiveness in order to find the unconditional love which would bring his heart home.

The older son was a slave to the law. He worked for everything and judged everything by its performance. He did not know the true love of his father. He too needed to come home and find unconditional love from the father. The older son also shows us the nature of a spiritual orphan.

One loved sin, the other loved the law - what they both needed was the law of love.

The father never put them out of his heart.



## Who are we like?

Do we live outside Father's house? Are we trying to earn our way in through what we do, rather than receiving the gift of relationship with Father through Jesus.

Are we like the younger son?

Are there areas of sin we need to bring to the cross?

Are we willing to humble ourselves and come back to Father, seeking forgiveness from Him?

Are we willing to lay our desires to one side and seek intimacy with Father?

There is a Father waiting for you with open arms. There is a robe and a ring waiting for you.

Are we like the older son?

Is there an emptiness in our heart that causes us to strive to find value and acceptance?

Are we judgmental and grace-less?

Do we want to be 'right'?

There is a Father waiting for you with open arms. There is a robe and a ring waiting for you.

All of us can step back inside Father's love. He always loves us. Nothing we can ever do can take us outside of His love. Rom 8:35-39.

## We all need a homecoming

John 14

v1-3 There is a place prepared in Father's presence for each one of us.

v23 "My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him"

Jesus became the way to the Father. The Father is the destination!

Jesus showed us how to be the perfect son - he lived in his Father's will and presence. He only did and said what his Father did and said. He lived to please his Father.

The Father loves us with the same love as He loves Jesus! (John 17:23).

All of us need to find our home with the Father - to receive His unconditional love that does not depend on what we may have done or not done. The emptiness of our heart can be filled with Father's love. We can lay down the striving and the struggle and find our rest in Him. Our relationship with Father can be renewed today! It is a free gift of grace.

Slaves or sons - which are we?

A slave points to a master but a son reveals a father!

IF ANYONE LOVES ME, HE WILL OBEY MY TEACHING. MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME TO HIM AND MAKE OUR HOME WITH HIM.

John 14:23 (NIV)



## Becoming a Son

Jesus came to show us the way to the Father, to bring us into relationship with Him, to make us sons and daughters and to give us the full inheritance planned for us.

Sadly, many in the church today miss out on this as they have not found God as their Father.

The promise of 2 Cor 6:18 is that God will be a Father to us.

Many instead are spiritual slaves or orphans.

(To clarify - the Bible talks about us being 'sons' and this includes us all: men and women, girls and boys! In these notes I have stayed with this pattern - but please, no-one is excluded, 'sonship' is for all God's children).

### Slaves

A slave belongs to another, he has no rights or freedom of his own. Everything is at the bidding of another.

A slave lives by the law, lives for the law and makes the law up to justify his position.

The book of Galatians talks about us being slaves to the law and contrasts this with the freedom that is ours through the redeeming work of Jesus. We have been taken from slavery into sonship. We have died to the law in order that we can live for Christ - Gal 2:19-20.

Our inheritance is not based on the law but on the promise of sonship through Jesus. No longer do we need to live by rules as we can now live in relationship with the Father.

### Orphans

An orphan has no identity, no name, no inheritance, nothing is done for him - he has to fight for everything he wants or needs.

An orphan strives to achieve or to perform, believing that this will gain him approval or value. He has a works based gospel rather than one based on relationship.

Everything he is or everything he has is a result of his own energy.

God came to be a father to the fatherless - Ps 68:5.

He promises not to leave us as orphans - John 14:18.

### Sons

A son has a name, an identity, an inheritance. He always has a place in the family no matter what he does. His identity is found in being his Father's son. Sonship is a free gift.

The Father wants us to come out of slavery and our orphan ways and to become a son as Jesus was. As we experience this for ourselves we can help lead others into the same freedom.

The prodigal son came back home (Luke 15); he received a robe to cover his filth and shame and a ring to signify that his place in the family had been restored.

A son is like Jesus who only did what his Father did, who only said what his Father said and who only went where His Father told him to go.

A son experiences the Father's love. He knows his Father's pleasure.

### Our identity

Jesus' identity came out of his relationship with his Father. It did not matter what he was doing - all the time he knew he was his Father's son. He was about his Father's business.

And he said to them "How is it that you had to look for me? Did you not see and know that it is necessary for me to be in my Father's house and about my Father's business". Luke 2:49 (AMP)

Sonship is central to Jesus' ministry:

Mat 3:16-17 The Father's affirmation of Jesus when he was baptised.

Mat 4:3 Satan's attack on Jesus in the wilderness.

Mat 17:1-5 The Father's affirmation on the Mount of Transfiguration.

John 19:7 The leaders' claim against Jesus.



John 3:35 Jesus was secure in who he knew he was!

Do we face an identity crisis or do we know who we are?  
Have we defined our ministry with a title or a label?  
Have we found the freedom available to the sons of God?

### Sonship leads to freedom

Ps 119:41-48 - there is a freedom that follows our obedience to His word.

Luke 4:16-20 - Jesus came to proclaim freedom for the captives.

John 8:31-36 - the truth will set us free. A son is free and belongs to the family forever.

A slave has no permanent place in the family but the son has a place forever! That's why the prodigal could be welcomed back.

Gal 3:26-4:7 - we have been redeemed (bought back) and given the full rights of a son; we have a name, an inheritance and a relationship with Father. True freedom is sonship not slavery.

Gal 5:1 - it is for freedom that we are set free. Freedom gives us a choice!

Rom 8:12-27 - creation is waiting in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. Sonship in us will change the world around us!

The freedom of the world leads to despair. Our freedom leads to restored relationship with the Father, wholeness and healing.

Col 3 - our freedom is ruling and reigning with Christ!

2 Cor 3:18 - the glory (presence) of God will be revealed in us in ever increasing measure.

### Our destiny as sons

Eph 3:14-19

v15 (AMP) - for whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (that Father from whom all fatherhood takes its title and derives its name).

Earthly fatherhood is a copy of God's fatherhood, an imitation.

Our identity and origin come from Him.

- We have a name that comes from Him - God is in control.
- God has unlimited resources - he goes beyond our comprehension.
- Strengthened in our inner being - goes beyond despair.
- Power from the Holy Spirit.
- Rooted and established in love - a strong connection in God.
- Understand the width, length, height and depth of His love.
  - Width - covers the breadth of our experience.
  - Length - covers our lives and eternity.
  - Height - the heights of celebration and elation.
  - Depth - the depths of discouragement or despair. We are never separated from God's love.

This is the full expression of God's love and it is available to us.

BECAUSE YOU ARE 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 A SON.

Gal 4:6-7 (NIV)





## Weakness - The Power of Sonship

### **As a father carries his son**

Deuteronomy 1:29-31

Do not be afraid. God goes ahead and fights for us. He delivered his people from Egypt and led them through the desert. He carried his people in the same way as a father carries his son. Not just when they were tired or despondent, but he carried them **all** the way and **all** the time. And so it is with us – he carries us all the way.

Deuteronomy 33:26-27

Underneath our lives are his everlasting arms.

Our Father is just not interested in carrying our burdens; he is more interested in carrying us.

Our weakness and dependence is not wrong. We were not made to be independent but to rely on him.

Isaiah 40:10-11

God carries us like a shepherd carries a lamb, close to his heart, tenderly and in a place of security. Not left defenseless but protected.

The strength and reliability of our Father is contrasted to our own weakness.

### **Our own effort**

We live in cultures that tell us: activity is good, strength is good, weakness is bad, our desire and effort is what makes a name for us.

We are taught that our performance and striving will win God's favour.

There are good works prepared for us (Ephesians 2:10). But sometimes they can take over and draw attention to us rather than to our Father. Sometimes we try and take on other people's good works as well as our own and wonder why we end up worn out.

We don't become sons and daughters through our own strength. We are sons and daughters because we have been born into the family and given the right to become children of God (John 1:12). We can choose to take up that right or continue to live as orphans.

Our example is Jesus. As we become like him we see it is not about our own effort but finding a life of rest and learning to listen to the voice of the Father. Jesus only did what his Father told him to do – he lived a life of total dependence on the Father.

### **A child can be carried**

Jesus shows us something important in Matthew 18:1-5.

We have to change, humble ourselves and become as a child.

Matthew 11:25-27 – the secrets of the kingdom are revealed to those with a childlike heart.

It is hard for a father to carry grown up children but it is easy to carry a little child.

Can we humble ourselves and become as a child? Can we lay aside our pride and independence and allow him to reach down and carry us. Unlike an earthly father God never grows tired or weary, he desires to carry us all the way.

As we come to him with a childlike heart we find a way of rest, that his burden is light and his yoke is easy.



## Going Deeper

He is more interested in you than all of your activity. Sadly, we think it is our activity that wins his heart.

### **Rely on his love**

1 John 4:16-19

We are encouraged to know and rely on his love.

### **Come**

There is an invitation for us to come. To come with a childlike heart and allow him to carry us.

Weakness and dependence are not things to be pushed away. As we embrace them we discover they are the power of sonship.

THEN I SAID TO YOU, DO NOT BE TERRIFIED; DO NOT BE AFRAID OF THEM. THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHO IS GOING BEFORE YOU, WILL FIGHT FOR YOU, AS HE DID FOR YOU IN EGYPT, BEFORE YOUR VERY EYES, AND IN THE DESERT. THERE YOU SAW HOW THE LORD YOUR GOD CARRIED YOU, AS A FATHER CARRIES HIS SON, ALL THE WAY YOU WENT UNTIL YOU REACHED THIS PLACE.

Deuteronomy 1:29-31 (NIV)



## Like a Child

Mat 18:1-6

Jesus has been teaching on the Kingdom of God and at this point, towards the end of his teachings, he gives us a clue to how we enter this new kingdom.

Jesus is full of surprises and this is no exception. The answer is that we need to change and become as little children!

This is very liberating! We don't have to have it all together. We don't have to be perfect. All we need to do is come to the Father like a child.

Technology and modern communications have made it possible for this generation of children to do and experience things previously impossible. Society almost makes them grow up too fast. In places like Rwanda and Burundi children have had to go through unimaginable horrors. All of these contribute to us losing a childlike spirit and heart. We quickly forget what it means to enjoy the carefree attitude of a child.

Yet Jesus calls us back to this attitude if we want to come into his Father's kingdom, back into relationship with Him. Jesus never gets us to anything that He has not already done. He had a childlike heart – He knew what it meant to be a son.

Our growing up inevitably means that we learn new skills, we become more independent and self sufficient. We lose that dependability on others.

To come with a childlike spirit means letting go of our pride. Pride is not found in the heart of God - in fact it contributed to Satan's downfall (Is 14:11-14).

That's why we have to change. This is an attitude of heart not behaviour!

### What is a child like?

#### A child is trusting

Ps 22:9

A child simply believes that his parents will provide everything that is needed, when it is needed! He starts life on the basis of trust!

God wants us to come to Him in the same way - simply believing Him for our needs. His character is consistent and He is completely trustworthy.

#### A child is dependent

A child's life is in someone else's hands. He is totally dependent on another!

As adults we try to do things on our own but God calls us to rely on Him.

Mat 6:25-33 - trust Him to provide.

#### A child does not plan ahead

A child does not work it out in advance! It just happens!

If God says something let it happen, let Him work it out, let Him provide, let Him lead.

#### A child is carefree

A child is not normally concerned with risk! He has a go and only worries about falling flat on his face when it happens!

Because our Father is so dependable and safe we can be carefree in His presence.

We can take risks of faith - the resources of Heaven are at our disposal.

1 Peter 5:7 - cast your cares on Him because He cares for you.

Ps 55:22 - cast your cares on Him - He never lets the righteous fall.

God does not want a show or a performance - He wants us to be free in His presence.



### **A child is innocent**

An unspoilt simplicity!

Mat 10:16

We spend too much time seeking popularity, trying to impress or please others. We hide our real self behind masks and protective layers.

In Father's presence we can remove the veils. We can be ourselves!

### **A child needs to be loved**

We were made to be loved!

God is LOVE. When we come to Him we come to Love - the perfect love that drives out all fear.

If we don't find real love we look for satisfaction in counterfeits.

God will never let us down because His love is perfect in every way.

1 John 3:1 - He lavishes His love on us.

### **A child needs his parents**

He needs the love and security that parents bring.

He needs direction, discipline and provision.

He needs love, nurture and care.

Parents can be like safety nets guiding children through a difficult world, providing boundaries where necessary and releasing them when and where appropriate.

God will provide this for His children.

### **Children imitate their parents**

Children do what their parents do!

John 6:19 - Jesus imitated his Father.

Eph 5:1 Paul encourages us to imitate God.

As we imitate Him so we take on His identity.

### **Children know how to rest**

They race around all day and then crash out.

Jesus lived a busy and pressurised life but he knew how to rest.

He took time out with his Father just to be with Him.

His heart was at rest, so much so that he could sleep through a storm.

Ps 131 He has stilled and quieted my heart.

Mat 11:28-30 Come all who are weary - He will give us rest.

Heb 4:9-11 A Sabbath rest for the people of God.

We, too, can enter that rest!

### **Children use their imagination**

They dream big dreams. Nothing is impossible in their creative minds.

They are full of imagination and creativity.

Eph 3:20-21 - God will do more than we can ask or even imagine.

1 Cor 2:9-10 - God has a big plan for us all.

### **Children are never satisfied**

They always want more! Come back and ASK!

John 7:37-38 - If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink - if you ask streams of living water will flow!

Is 55:1 come if you are thirsty - don't need money, if you want it - come and get it! It will satisfy.

Ps 103:5 - He satisfies your desires.



## Children know how to play

Children love to play - they make it happen!

Is 55:12 - go out with joy!

Mal 4:2 leap like calves released from the stall!

The Jewish nation knew how to have parties.

Being a child of God releases joy in us.

Luke 15 - joy in Heaven!

## Coming to Father as a child

Let us come to our Father with a childlike attitude, simply placing our little hand in His big hand.

It is a process of laying down ourselves and finding that we are really very little and that God is BIG - VERY BIG.

To come in this way means that we have to change (Mat 18:3) - the NASB calls this a conversion.

Letting go of our pride and independence is a humbling experience but in doing so we find that we have a great big God.

A relationship like this is based on 'being' not 'doing'.

We have been trained to be strong but where is the power?

Jesus knew what it was to come with a childlike heart and his life was very powerful.

2 Cor 12:9 God's power is perfected in our weakness!

If we can let go of our 'power' and come humbly to our Father then great things can happen.

God cannot fill a closed heart. A child has an open heart and one like this can be filled with the Father's love. When we rely on Him in this way there is no limit to what He can do with us!

This is a simple, yet powerful way to live our Christian life. It is the way that Jesus not only taught, but modelled as well. He showed us the key to an intimate relationship with the Father - coming as a child!

"I lay aside my pride  
I lay aside my fear as I bow my heart  
Before Your throne  
I will put my faith in You and  
open up my heart  
For Father, like a child  
I want to come

And I will run into Your open, waiting arms  
It's here that I am safe, for You are strong  
It's here I find the truth of who I am in You  
When like a child, I choose to come".

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