

Part 1: The Perfect Father

Dad. The word can provoke pleasant memories or utter anguish. If you knew the love of a wise, caring father, it makes you smile fondly. If you grew up as I did, the word “father” may leave a sour taste in your mouth. This is tragic. Father hunger is a serious disease in 21st century America. If you suffer this longing and do not address it, you will wander through life handicapped, struggling from a battered self-esteem.

My father never took me fishing. Never played ball with me. Never said, “That’s good, son.” His lack of involvement wounded me and created a deep sense of insecurity, guilt, and fear. Those feelings handicapped me emotionally for many years.

But that’s only half the story. In my early teens, my mother shared the truth about my background. I was conceived by rape. My lust-driven father forced himself on her as Mom--a practical nurse--was in his home, caring for his ailing father. After a doctor refused to perform an abortion, my mother prayed. Though she didn’t know how she could care for me, she felt God impressing her to give birth. She sensed this child would help bring joy into the world.

Though without a father much of my life, for several of my formative years I had an unofficial foster father. A pastor and his wife gave me a home as a young child. After returning to my mother, at fifteen I moved back. During those years, I observed the image of a caring father. I saw how a father can and should respond to situations while relating to his child.

This “dad” made an indelible imprint on my life. I saw the love he had for me and his wife, daughter, and grandchildren. He demonstrated care, compassion, and genuine interest in the well-being of everyone he met. Because of this family and their church’s influence, I came to know God as my own Father. When I met Jesus and He introduced me to His perfect, heavenly Father, I overcame past hurts and found meaning in life.

Though I never had a healthy relationship with my earthly father, I am grateful I came to know God as a loving, attentive Father. As a result, I have shared joy with thousands and seen multitudes come to know God as their Father. This is a rewarding experience for me and those who will respond to the truth of this book.

Christ taught us that we can address this supernatural Being as our Father. In His model prayer, called “The Lord’s Prayer,” He told us to begin, “Our Father who art in heaven” (Matthew 6:9). In Romans 8:15, the apostle Paul assured us we can speak to God using the Greek term “abba,” an intimate word for Father.

Jesus continually referred to God as His Father. He also stressed that we could know the Father in this way (John 17:24-25). No matter how wonderful our earthly father, no one can match our heavenly Father. He numbers every hair on our head (Matthew 10:30) and sees everything we do. In that same passage, Jesus assured us that if God watches over the birds of the air, He is certain to watch over and provide for us.

This is an awesome gift. But receiving it includes acknowledging that we have fallen short of God’s standards for living. In order to take this step, we must know we need forgiveness and be aware of the urgency to change our behavior. If we don’t believe we need to be lifted out of defeat and despair, we will never cry out for the help that comes only from heaven.

Perhaps this illustration will help you recognize your need to follow God’s guidelines for life. Imagine you board an airplane and the flight attendant says, “Put this parachute on; it is necessary that you wear it.” Yet, if you noticed that you were the only one wearing a parachute, you would feel silly if the plane cruised comfortably across the country. Others might stare and ask, “Why you are wearing that thing?” Feeling conspicuous, you might ask yourself, “What am I doing? I don’t need this parachute” and remove it.

But say you knew that a disaster would occur during the flight. The only way to escape would be by using the parachute. Given that scenario, all the criticism, mockery, and character assaults aimed your direction would bounce harmlessly to the floor. You would rest in peace, knowing you had the tools to safely reach the ground.

In the same way, we all need God as our security and safety. Jesus is the path by which we escape eternal separation from the Father. Without a proper relationship with God, you are doomed to repeat the misguided behavior that will keep you mired in a pit of despair and defeat. What’s worse, you will be cut off eternally from the eternal life God so freely offers through His Son.

If you don't know Him yet, I hope the first part of this study will convince you to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior. He is the only way to the Father.