

Getting to Grips with

God

How our understanding of God changes everything

Part 1: Honouring the Father

Session #3 Finding the Father's Heart

"... For this God is our God..." – Psalm 48v 14

Sladebrook Evangelical Church

www.sladebrook.org.uk

Introduction and Aim of this Teaching Series:

This series of Sunday morning talks introduces us to the magnificent doctrine of God. Often trivialised (and certainly simplified) Christian faith and maturity depends on an ever-increasing appreciation of who God is and what He has done. As well as “*getting to grips with God*” we will also attempt to loosen our grip on what God is not, dispelling some commonly held misunderstandings. It is hoped that with Scripture as our guide and with the Holy Spirit’s help, we will discover more about the God we worship and seek to apply this knowledge in our daily Christian walk and witness.

Subject in this series include:

- Honouring God the Father (September)
 - *Who God is (and isn't) – Reality, Trinity and revelation of God/unhelpful stereotypes*
 - *God in God's own words – biblical descriptions of God/Who He is/what He does*
 - *Finding the Father's Heart – understanding just how much God loves us, and how that should be experienced*

- Following God the Son (October)
 - *Why Jesus changes everything for everyone*
 - *Finding acceptance in Christ – what Jesus has brought us into: forgiveness/acceptance/purpose/unconditional love/grace*
 - *The current role/ future prospects of Jesus and His church*

- Welcoming God the Spirit (November)
 - *Who is the Holy Spirit? Confusions and clarifications regarding the Holy Spirit*
 - *What does He do? The ministries and manifestations of the Spirit*
 - *How should He work in me? The role of the Spirit in the life of the believer*

Getting to Grips with God: Finding the Father's Heart

It has been said that the role and influence of fathers is most significant in a child's development. Whether it is their pained absence, unwelcome dominance, or inspirational influence, our formative memories and subsequent lives are massively impacted by our fathers, and the indelible impact they make upon us.

We have been thinking about how God reveals himself in Scripture. It is, of course, impossible to measure or fully comprehend God. Yet, as we have already seen, He reveals Himself in ways that grant us a glimpse of His glory, goodness and grace. Perhaps the most fascinating description Scripture gives us is of God as Father. This portrayal, is surprisingly rare in the Old Testament: God is specifically called the Father of the nation of Israel (Deuteronomy 32v 6; Isaiah 63v16 ; (twice) 64v8 ; Jeremiah 3v 4; 3v 19 ; 31v 9; Malachi 1v 6; 2v 10) or as the Father of certain individuals.

However, the teaching of God as Father takes a decided turn with Jesus, for "Father" was his favourite term for addressing God. It appears on his lips some sixty-five times in the Synoptic Gospels and over one hundred times in John. There are about 110 pages in the Bible dedicated to Jesus' ministry and message. We have approximately 25,000 words that He spoke recorded in the Bible. Of those 25,000 words, Jesus taught about the Father in Heaven at least 181 times! This means approximately 1 out of every 140 words, Jesus was speaking about His Father! His central message and purpose was to restore us to a relationship with our Father in Heaven.

In the light of Jesus' radical re-envisioning of who God is, Paul's letters also go on to describe God as "Father" over forty times. This then is crucial New Testament truth, intended to change everything we understand about who God is, why He acts the way He does and, perhaps most importantly, what He really feels and desires from us His people in response.

Read: Luke chapter 15 verses 11-32

(Also: **Psalm 68v 5-6; Isaiah 64v 8; Matthew 6v 9-14; John 14v 8-11; Romans 8v 15; Ephesians 1v 3-5; 1 John 3v 1;** for some more descriptions about God as Father)

Finding the Father's Heart

Everything we read about the father in this parable is reflected elsewhere in Scripture concerning God the Father:

- **LOVE: THE DEVOTION OF THE FATHER**
"... his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him..."
- Luke 15v 20 (**also John 3v 16; James 1v 17**)
- **LEARNING: THE DISCIPLINE OF THE FATHER**
"So he divided his property between them."
- Luke 15v 12 (**also Psalm 81v 12; Romans 1v 24; Hebrews 12v 6**)
- **LIFE: THE DESIRE OF THE FATHER**
"... we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again." - Luke 15v 32 (**also Hosea 1v 8; 2Peter 3v 9**)

Honouring the Father:

Finding the Father's Heart enables us to:

- Worship more vibrantly
- Pray more confidently
- Witness more authentically
- Parent more successfully
- Minister more effectively

Respond:

How does your experience with your earthly father impact your view of God as your heavenly Father?

How comfortable are you with addressing God as Abba Father, or "Daddy"? Why do some Christians struggle with this?

***Do you feel loved by the Father?** How do you think God feels about you?
What do you think is the greatest desire of the Father's heart for you?*

***Can you think of a time when the Father disciplined you?** What did this feel like and what did you learn from it?*

***Meditate on the three aspects we have considered:** The Father's Devotion, Discipline and Desire. How do these continue to shape your Christian life?*