

Our Father

His Role in His Family

John O. Reid (1930-2016)

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In the Los Angeles Times of June 16, 1966, an article appeared titled, “No Longer Missing in Action,” and it went on to say, “Seized with self-doubts and worries about the world in which his children are growing up, Alan Clark struggles to relearn what it takes to be a father.” The article goes on to say, “If fathers don’t stand up, then our country's going to have a real problem, and our families are going to have a real problem. You'll have a new generation of kids who don't understand respect, and who don't understand moral issues.”

Then it goes on with some startling things. It said, “The absence of fathers is reaching epidemic proportions in America, which bears the unwelcome distinction of leading the world in fatherless families. Tonight, about 40 percent of the nation's children will go to sleep in homes apart from their biological fathers.” It said nearly 27 percent of babies, including 68 percent of black infants, are born in single parent homes, and only half of U.S. children will spend their entire childhood in an intact family. So for the first time in the history of any human society, millions of children are growing up separated from their fathers.

This is a historic event unprecedented in human affairs. Talk about Bad News Bears in this society. Henry Biller, author of *The Father Factor*, estimates that more than 75 percent of American children face paternal deprivation, often because their fathers are too busy to spend time with them. Even in two-parent households, fewer than 25 percent of young children average an hour a day of one-on-one contact with their fathers. It was typical for dads to have less than a half an hour of time with their kids each day, Biller said.

Wade Horn, the director of the National Fatherhood Initiative states that fathers see their role as being primarily breadwinner, and his organization is trying to get fathers to see that they are needed as nurturers, as

disciplinarians, as mentors, and as moral instructors. He states, “Their roles are far more important than just money.” He goes on to say, “Indeed, social scientists have long known that there is no substitute for a good father, not even a good mother.” Fathers play differently with their kids, teaching different lessons. They throw babies up in the air and help toddlers to hang upside down from jungle gyms. Mothers wince and tell their kids, “Be careful!” A father’s rough physical play, experts say, arouses extreme emotions in young children, teaching them to regulate their feelings, a skill that is crucial to getting along well in society.

“So, when fathers are involved in the lives of their children, we know a lot of interesting things happen,” says Dr. Kyle Pruett, a Yale University child psychiatry professor. “We know kids stay longer in school. They are better at coping with frustration and failure, and we know that they stay in relationships longer, in marriages longer, and that in general, self-esteem is improved, and this comes from a father that loves and works with his child.” Pruett also found that not only are the children the ones who reap the benefit—men who are involved as fathers, he says, tend to be happier and more stable at work and at home.

And finally, from the National Center of Health Statistics, they reported that children in single parent families are more likely to abuse drugs, become pregnant as teenagers, and drop out of schools. The message the article is trying to get out is that men must be *intentional* about being fathers. Brethren, at least some of the world begins to realize the importance of a father. Now what scripture comes racing into your mind when you hear something like this? Malachi 4.

Malachi 4:5-6 “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

And God was true. Turn over to Luke 1. About 400 years later, God did send John the Baptist and we will read about that here, starting in verse 11.

Luke 1:11-17 Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias: for your prayer is heard, and your wife Elizabeth shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.

For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

This was a time when God the Father would start calling those who were to have the opportunity to become His children. This includes you, and of course me—all of us. There was a time when He would specifically use the relationship between a father and the children, and the relationship between the children and the father, to show those called the relationship they were to have with Him.

Now as we look at the world around us, brethren, we see the seams coming apart. We see no way to correct the situation. We do not have the power to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children. It will take the return of Jesus Christ to turn this world around, to turn the hearts of the children to the fathers, and the other way around, and each other towards God.

We all understand that marriage in analogy depicts our future wedding as the Bride of Jesus Christ. We are to learn to yield in marriage in submission to each other, to love, to be thoughtful, to be faithful to one another, to be fully committed to the marriage, and to become one flesh. We understand this is the purpose of the marriage, thus depicting our becoming one flesh and being faithful and trusting in Jesus Christ in the future.

But what overall principle can be drawn by having the hearts of the fathers turned toward their children, and the children's hearts turned towards their fathers? Could it be that it is this type of relationship—a relationship of love, of deep respect, of obedience, of trust, of friendship, of wanting to emulate our father—that God the Father wants us to have? If you were asked why Jesus Christ came to this earth, one of the first things you would say was that He came to die for mankind, that they would all have a chance, and that would be the right answer. And if you did not answer that, you might say He came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and that would be true, too. But there is one more very important reason for those called at this time and that is that Jesus Christ came to reveal the Father to us.

Some of the world around us is just starting to wake up to the importance of fathers, but Jesus Christ already knew that the revealing of our Father to us was essential to our being in the Kingdom of God. And I hope this morning's message will help all of us to have, at least by the time it is finished, a closer relationship with our Father in heaven.

Before I came to the Feast, I was talking to one of the members and she made the comment, "I just don't understand God the Father. I don't think He likes me. I feel like He's going to punish me and I'm just afraid of Him." This is not what God wants. Let us turn over to Matthew 11 and we will start to see some of this, where Jesus Christ is going to reveal the Father to us. I hope you find this interesting today. It is to me, anyway.

Matthew 11:25-27 At that time, Jesus answered and said, "I thank you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. [Jesus Christ is agreeing with God the Father for doing it this way.] All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no man knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son will reveal Him."

So, we begin to get the picture here that Jesus Christ is going to reveal the Father. He says that no one can fully know the Son except the Father, and in the original it reads that "neither knows anyone the Father except the Son." Anyone. The twenty-four elders do not know the Father like the Son does.

The angels do not know the Father like the Son does. And this is important because, you see, He is the one that really knows the Father, and He is the one that is going to reveal Him to us.

John 1:18 No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom [which is in an intimate relationship with the Father] of the Father, He has declared Him.

Here we see that no one has seen the Father with their eyes and only the begotten Son—who is closely related to the Father and everything He does—He is declaring Him. In other words, declaring means “to lead out,” “to make known,” “to unfold in teaching,” and “to declare by making known.” So we begin to get the impression here, we begin to get the understanding, that we are going to have to have Him revealed to us by Jesus Christ to see Him.

John 17:6 “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

Then in verse 26, Jesus Christ repeats. He says:

John 17:26 “I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Here He said, “I manifested, I have made real Your name to those whom You gave Me.” Here the word manifest includes the attributes and character of God the Father. Jesus made known His character, His law, His will, His plan of mercy. In other words, He was revealing the Father to them, and we will find out later that they just did not get it.

Jesus Christ starts right off in the Sermon on the Mount telling us we have a heavenly Father, and that we will be held accountable to Him. Now we are going to go through quite a few scriptures here, so just turn over to Matthew 5 and I will read them, and you can just follow along without having to write anything down particularly unless you wish to. He starts right off reminding us and showing us that we have a Father. Verse 16:

Matthew 5:16 “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify **your** Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:44 “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be the children of **your** Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:48 “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as **your** Father in heaven is perfect.”

Chapter 6:

Matthew 6:1 “Take heed that you do not do your charitable works before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from **your** Father in heaven.”

Matthew 6:4 “. . . that your alms may be in secret; and **your** Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Matthew 6:6 “But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut the door, pray to **your** Father who is in the secret place; and **your** Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”

Matthew 6:8-9 “Therefore do not be like them. For **your** Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.”

Matthew 6:14 “For if you forgive men their trespasses, **your** heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will **your** heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.”

Matthew 6:26 “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet **your** heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not more value than they?”

We only have a few more here.

Matthew 6:32 “For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For **your** heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.”

And finally, in chapter 7:

Matthew 7:11 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will **your** Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him!”

You see brethren, Jesus Christ, right off the bat, was teaching something new. He was teaching His disciples, teaching us, that we have a Father in heaven. We are going to learn more about Him.

Now I know that each of us has had a different relationship with our physical fathers. My father was raised on a dirt farm in Texas, and he was only allowed into the house—into the parlor—twice in his whole life. Many times, he had to eat his lunch on the back steps. He was not allowed in the house. His mother, my grandmother, slept with every man (pretty much) that came along, and she was a very mean woman. She finally killed herself, her life was so wretched. I can remember my life with my dad, and I was pretty afraid of him, and there was only one happy day that we had. My mom and dad were divorced when I was about six, so I would spend weekends with him. One day he took us fishing and we had a great time. But pretty much all of my life, I did not understand my dad, until later.

Some of you do not even know who your fathers are. Some of you have been sexually abused or beaten by your father, some abandoned by your father.

Some had fathers that abused drugs, that abused alcohol. And at the very best, some of us had pretty good fathers (like my son, who was absolutely blessed). But even with fathers that try their best, we all make mistakes.

Is it any wonder that we need to have the Father revealed to us? All of us, to one degree or another, have a distorted picture of what a father should be like. And because of this distortion, we do not have a true picture of what a father should be. We have a picture of our Father in heaven in Daniel 7. Let us turn back there. As far as I know, this is the only picture of God the Father, and it is pretty impressive.

Daniel 7:9-10 “I watched till thrones were in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was like a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; and a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.”

Wow, what a picture! The description is full of majesty, picturing the awesome, utter power and greatness of the Father, but on the human level, it is hard for us to relate. What is His character like? What is His nature like? How can we relate to someone like this, that is so awesome, who sits with the judgment books opened? That is pretty scary, sort of frightening.

But Jesus Christ knew that human nature being what it was, and the pressures of this world on the family, plus the fact that Satan—who hates family—affects our minds, He knew that we would not begin to understand the Father. We would have to be *shown* the Father. We had to come to understand His nature, His thinking, His love, His character, His discipline, His work ethic, and His great power.

I must admit when I first came into the church, I had a really hard time with God the Father. We were supposed to pray to Him, and I knew that, but He was a hazy figure. It was Jesus Christ, it was the active One—He did everything, He accomplished everything—and I could sort of relate to Him. He was the One who was easy to understand, and He was the one who was getting things done. In short, I could not relate to the fact that I specifically

had a Father in heaven. And I might add that you, specifically, have a Father, individually, and He is your Father in heaven. And He has a Father's responsibility toward each one of us, something that we should remember.

Now as children growing up toward adulthood, we may have had many nagging questions. You know, "Was I planned for? Was I an accident? Was it just one of those mistakes? Did my parents really want me?" But there has never been a family that has been more planned for than the one that is here. It was planned for before the earth was created, and no matter what our background, no matter what our schooling, our age, our wealth, our looks or our lack of looks, our abilities or lack of abilities, the fact that you and I are here tells us that we are wanted. John 6:44, old familiar scriptures.

John 6:44 "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Here we have definite proof that we are really wanted. We know that, for whatever reason God had, He deliberately, with forethought and conscious planning, selected you to become His specific son or His daughter. Your Father in heaven called you to be part of the firstfruits of God, to be part of His Family.

As our Father, it is His responsibility to see that we are taught and perfected, and thus He gave us Jesus Christ to watch over us, our Elder Brother, who in turn gave us to the ministry. These next scriptures in Ephesians 4 have been covered three or four times already, but it must be that God wants us to hear them again because we are going to do just that. Verse 11:

Ephesians 4:11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.

The object here is to show that He has provided for ample instruction for His children, as to their education. He gave some prophets and evangelists and pastors and shepherds to watch over His flock. A shepherd's job is to watch the flock, and to protect and to guide it, so the pastor is to do the same thing. The question is, why should he do this? Verse 12:

Ephesians 4:12 For the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.

The word perfecting, here, of the saints, is a medical term. It means “to put in order.” When your arm is broken, it has to be set and be put right, and that is what this phrase means. So, it is for God’s children to have every advantage of becoming complete in all knowledge and understanding. This is the purpose that God has, so that they can be used to minister in the Kingdom of God. This is the purpose for which God is training and raising His children. Why? Verse 13:

Ephesians 4:13 till we all come to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

God is doing something wonderful as a Father for all of us. I do not know that we always stop and consider it—that we might have the same acquaintance with the mind of God that Jesus Christ does, that we might become the individual called, grown up, and no longer the child. This is what the purpose of His teaching is for.

Ephesians 4:14-15 That we should be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.

Now, little children have many wonderful qualities—they are open, they are loving, they are trusting—but they have one flaw. That is, that they can be easily swayed. You see, the Father does not want us to be easily swayed, and that is why He has given us this leadership in the ministry to teach us. And He does not want us tossed to and fro, as a ship that is off course, that does not have an anchor. He just wants us to learn. He said, “but speaking in truth.” The actual word here means “truthing in love.” But speaking complete unvarnished truth, that we may grow up mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, to become a completely finished person to Him in all things who is the head, even Jesus Christ.

So, God the Father has put us here, has given us the ministry to instruct us, to grow up mentally, emotionally, and spiritually, and to become a complete person. This is what God the Father is after. This is His responsibility toward us, this is why we must obey the instruction we are given, this is why we must put our way *off* and put *on* the mind of God. And I have got to say, we are blessed to have a pastor that is going to point us in that direction.

Every one of us understands, in broad principles, how children are raised. In the early years, they receive a lot of close correction, instruction. When they are very young, you teach the child about God, do not go out in the street, pick up your clothes, say ‘Thank you’ and have good manners, always tell the truth; the basic things, always show respect to parents and adults. That is the beginning.

As they get older, the instruction is still there but the correction and the control is a little bit less. An emphasis begins to be placed on other things. We continue to teach the child about God at the higher level, but now we say, “Be sure and do your homework, it builds character.” “Be sure and complete your chores—cut the lawn, clean up your room, tithe, learn to spend the money you have earned, learn to tithe on it and spend it wisely.” And remind them again to always represent the family well.

As they get into their mid-teens, we have to teach them additionally about God, but now hormones are starting to work in their bodies, so we start to teach them about hormones, and to have them give control. And maybe a part-time job has been taken and we begin to put into practice the instruction on work ethics. We should be helping our children about this time to consider college and advanced training in whatever field they seem to be given to. If they purchase their own clothes, we have to hold our breath and watch what they bring home, but we hope it will all be fine. And we are still guiding them as to what television and movies they should be watching.

But then they get to eighteen, nineteen, twenty, and a lot of the heavy control that we used to have on them now is relaxed because they are now hopefully equipped to step out on their own. Hopefully they are now able to make their own right decisions. It is a time when we cross our fingers and toes, legs, knees, elbows, whatever, because we pray for our kids to make it. In the early years, much control was exerted and now in the latter years, much less

control is exerted, and we all pray that our children will put the lessons learned, the character built, and the ethics taught into practice, becoming wonderful responsible adults.

I do not know if you realize, brethren, but this is exactly what God is doing with us.

Now if you recall, back in the 60s and the early 70s, you can remember the strict training that you received. I know I was terrified of deacons. I mean, I did not have any “armband” deacons in our congregation, but I was terrified. Whenever they spoke, I just trembled. I remember once, I was barbecuing chicken in a big church barbecue, and the elder came over, Herbert McGoo, and he said, “I don’t think you’re doing that right,” and I said, “Well, yes, I’m doing it right. It’s just fine.” He said, “All right. You’re going to feed 200 people here. I *hope* you’re doing it right.” And I said, “Yes sir, I’ll do my best.” And all of the deacons stood off to one side and they waited till he left, and then they came up and said, “Do you know what you just did?” And I said, “What did I just do?” They said, “You argued with a minister.” I could not leave the barbecue but I wanted to go to the bathroom. I mean, I was just terrible. I was brokenhearted. And we were all afraid to step out and do anything.

You know, whenever we came in, we learned the basics. We were worried about pork, and about leavening [during the Days of Unleavened Bread]. We examined every label. We learned to stand up against pagan holidays, and in spite of all the pressure, we took a stand on the Sabbath and perhaps lost our jobs because of it. We made decisions to put God first in prayer and study every day. We learned to fast and to keep all of God’s holy days. And we trained our children. And we went to *every* Sabbath service and to *every* Bible study no matter where it was. We were taught to put God first in all we did, and with us in doing this was our parent, the church, helping us to keep our mind focused.

And then, the situation that Darryl Henson described—of the boy, 25 years old, sitting at home, smoking and not doing anything—sort of took over. We were just sitting around in church and not really growing. Then the unthinkable happened and God decided to scatter the church and we all found ourselves separated and loose, or separated in thinking from the parent

organization. The question that God was going to make us consider was, would we follow what we had been taught, would we be true and faithful to God?

And God was going to find this out. Just as our children, when they left home, had to bump into the world they lived in, learning to apply the principles that they had been taught, so we had to flounder through all those who were casting aside what they had learned. In many cases, we had to reprove all that we had learned because so many things were in question. We had to struggle through all the confusion and the fear and the separation from the strength that had been in the physical organization that was now shattered. We had learned in principle, and now, we had to learn in fact. We had been taught in the school room and now we had to put what we had been taught into practice.

For many of us, it was a gut-wrenching, frightening time, just as it was perhaps for our children to go on their first job interview, or to step out of the home and start to live their own lives. And just as we wanted our children to learn to stand on their own two feet, God the Father wanted us to learn and to be able to stand alone as His children on our own two feet. Now lest anybody here think that I am saying that we should be independent, I am not saying that because you see, that would fly in the face of Ephesians 4, where God provides the ministry for us.

John Ritenbaugh has often said that he needs to be taught, and he said in these last years, he has heard things that he has never heard in the last twenty years. I hope they were all good. But he has learned a lot. Darryl Henson needs to be taught. John Reid needs to be taught. Richard Ritenbaugh needs to be taught. Harold Way, Elroy Farah needs to be taught. All of us, brethren, need to be taught, every one of us, and every week we learn from each other. This is why it is so important. But if that teaching should be taken away someday, then God wants us, by that time, to be trained to stand, and as John said, we may be atomized. Who knows what the future holds? But we need the training now.

Whether we realize it or not, brethren, it was God the Father that was overseeing all that was taking place in our education, and painful though it was, He was seeing that we would grow up. Albeit, all the stress and the

strain, and with the lessons that we were going to learn now at this time, were going to be lessons that were going to stay with us. And that is extremely important.

I guess the fact that you are here, and the fact that you are tithing all three tithes to be here, and the fact that you are keeping the Sabbath and the holy days, the fact that you are loving one another, and being kind and a family indicates that you remembered all that you were taught before everything just came apart, and that is pleasing in God's sight.

As children growing up, we really do not understand why our parents did what they did, and as the saying goes, "When I was sixteen, my dad didn't know anything, but by the time I turned twenty-five, he'd really gotten a lot smarter." And I think you remember that. What had really taken place was that understanding and maturing started to take place. We began to realize why our parents did some of what they did. I have even known men in their sixties that wish with all their heart that they could talk to their fathers because they recognize now that their fathers had learned a lot, and were sound in their thinking, and they wish they could bounce things off them. Probably the greatest wake-up call many of us have is when we have children. Then we begin to really understand why our parents did what they did, and it is a whole new world for us.

Now as I began to get a few years on me, I began to understand my father a lot better. In his early years, he was filled—from his background—with tremendous insecurity. I never knew why he was angry all the time; I was just a little kid, but because of his upbringing, he had no idea how to love a wife or a family. He was ashamed of his job as a telephone pole climber for Pacific Gas & Electric, but he overcame that. He went and became one of the top executives of the company, worked right up through the ranks, and when WWII came, he enlisted in the army and he went to Officers Candidate School, came out a second lieutenant, and by the end of the war, he was a full colonel, a full bird colonel. Impressive. When he was discharged from the army, he opened a small frozen food company, and he wrote one of the first books on frozen food ever written. And then when he retired, he built two or three fine homes, all by himself from the ground up. By this time, he

was in his third marriage, and it was a fine marriage because he had learned a lot during this time, so I finally began to see the many fine qualities that my dad had, too.

Brethren, Jesus Christ came that we might see our Father, and see the wonderful qualities that He possesses, but how can you relate to somebody you cannot see? The disciples of Jesus Christ were a lot like we are. They saw Jesus Christ, He was the one that was important to them—He taught them, He ate with them, He slept with them, He taught them about the Father—but the Father just was not real to them. So Philip asked the question we are going to read about in John 14:8.

John 14:8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us.”

Now what prompted the question, verse 7:

John 14:7 [He said] “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also, and from now on you know you Him and have seen Him.”

And Philip said again, “Well Lord, okay, I understand what You said, but show us the Father and it’ll be sufficient.” Now when Jesus Christ said, “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also,” there are two words for “known” that could have been used here: *oida*, meaning “a fullness of knowledge,” having complete knowledge about the Father, having every aspect of it in your mind, you are just completely covered.

But it was this second word that was used which was *ginosko*. You want to remember what I am going to say here because this is going to teach you to see the Father. *Ginosko* was the word that was used here, and it means is “progressive knowledge,” “knowledge acquired over a period of time by observation.” This is the word that is used in this verse, and the verse *could* read, “If you had known Me, had *really* come to know Me by perception of how I live and do things, you would have known the Father. You would have had perception of Him, as well. As you obey Me, you are unconsciously coming to the Father, as one who is in Him.” And now because they understood, they would consciously be in the process of knowing the Father.

You see brethren, it is the same thing for us. Once we understand that by our observation of how Jesus Christ obeyed and lived and served and gave Himself for others, we see the exact mind and nature of God the Father in action, and we begin to see. And again, in verse 8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father and it will suffice us,” Maybe Philip wanted to see Him pass by in front of them as Jesus Christ did with Moses. Philip was not satisfied with abstractions or concepts that came by observations. This was not what he wanted. He wanted the real thing, and yet, that is just what Jesus Christ was trying to get across to him and to us today. This is how we are going to see God the Father. He goes on in verse 9:

John 14:9 Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”

What He was saying here was, “If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father.” He said, “If you have seen all that I have done, then you would have seen exactly what the Father would have done in My place.” Because you see, the Father’s nature is exactly like Jesus Christ’s.

The term “seen” here is probably something we should all take note of. The word “seen” means “to perceive” what you are looking at, not just go down the street seeing things; to understand what you are looking at, to learn from that. He said, “I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” The relationship is of the most intimate nature. Jesus Christ and our Father are of one mind in all They think and do. They share the same Spirit, and even though They are separate, They are really one.

Brethren, do we begin to see the goal that God the Father has set for us to achieve? When He finishes our individual training, we will have that same

relationship, that same closeness with God the Father that Jesus Christ does. We seem so far from it now but that is exactly where God the Father is going to bring us. This is His purpose.

The world around us pictures God as being harsh, unrelenting, a harsh, unrelenting, angry figure that cannot wait to punish us. My wife and I have had the privilege to travel over to Singapore, to Bali, and to Malaysia. If you want to see some nasty looking gods, they got them! Do you know that in Singapore, they have a theme park, and in the theme park they have like department store windows where they have gods set up, and they are the most vicious, miserable-looking gods. They are killing people, they are stabbing people, they are torturing them, and our tour guide said the people in Singapore take their children here to scare them into being good! You know, “If you're not good, this god's gonna get you!” And as we looked around, I mean, you have heard of the “Lee” family, probably, (Lee's god) through all the members of the Lee family. There is Ug (Ug Lee, get it?), Ghast-lee, Home-lee, Wretched-lee, Putrid-lee, Terrib-lee, they are all Lee's. They are just horrible, and this is the image that people have of gods.

So, without the Spirit of God, mankind cannot see the wonderful nature of God. Now we are going to look at some vignettes, if you will, of God, some little pictures of the actions of Jesus Christ that are going to depict God the Father. Let us turn over to Luke 11. We will start there when He upbraided the Pharisees.

Luke 11:37-44 And as He spoke, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him. So He went in and sat down to eat. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that He had not first washed before dinner. Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.

Foolish ones! Did not He who made the outside make the inside also? But rather give alms of such things as you have; then indeed all things are clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in

the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like graves which are not seen, and the men who walk over them are not aware of them.”

Luke 11:46-47 And He said, “Woe to you also, lawyers! For you load men with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them.”

And on and on He goes.

Now what can we learn about God the Father from this? Well, in verses 39-41, Jesus Christ tells them that they are hypocrites and that they look good on the outside just as the vessels that are washed, but inside, they are full of grasping, robbery, and wickedness. He reminds them that God made the outside and the inside to be clean. He said, “Be clean inside.” God tells them to give to the poor. He tells them to quit their evil life, and when they have done this, they will be clean.

Christ tells them that they have their priorities backwards. He tells them that they should tithe of cumin, mint, and anise, but He said the things that really concerned Him are the weightier matters of the law—faith, mercy, justice. That is what Jesus Christ and God the Father have great concern for. He tells them in verse 43 they are ostentatious, arrogant, disdainful, haughty, conceited, pompous, insolent, and egotistical, which is just the opposite of Jesus Christ, and thus, it is just the opposite of God the Father.

They were showing that they were intolerant, exclusive in their thinking, and that they were like graves not seen, that others were defiled in coming in contact with them, that they were giving people burdens impossible to bear.

Now brethren, what can we learn from this? We can see that Jesus Christ and God the Father are not like this. The Father would never compromise with acting righteously, and in truth, God the Father is not anything like the Pharisees. He is not harsh. He is not unfeeling as the world (and perhaps even some of us) think. He is not puffed up or pompous or arrogant. He is

concerned with the weightier matters of the law; faith, mercy, love of God, and justice. He is deeply concerned about the poor and the helpless, and will do all He can to help them.

Take a quick turn over to Matthew 11, verses 28 through 30, Jesus Christ speaking. Again, we begin to hear the mind of God the Father in action here:

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [See, He is not putting a burden on them that they cannot handle.] Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. [He said] For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Jesus Christ and God the Father have the same mind. This is your Father that sat in great majesty. This is the mind that He has. John 2, we will get another vignette here, another picture of Jesus Christ in action.

John 2:13-17 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business. When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the money changers' money and overturned the tables. And He said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!” Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”

Now we all know the story here. The people came into town with Roman money, and they had to buy sacrifices, and they had to change their money for the Temple money to be used. And under the chief priests, these concessions that were put up became a profit center, a money-making operation, a commercial venue.

Several things were taking place here. One, the people were being cheated. Two, because of the great profits being made, those priests who were involved became polluted. The Temple was a place to worship, a place to draw closer to God, a house of prayer, and it was being treated like a house

of merchandise with the attitude of a swap meet. The focus of the Temple was no longer on God but on making money.

The lesson here is that Jesus would not compromise for a minute with sin, for standing up for the truth, He cried aloud, He spared not, and there was no concession in any of this. He stood up, and as He did (or as His Father would have), He had unwavering direction to correct the situation. He would not tolerate sin for a second.

Luke 4:33-42 Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet, and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him in the midst, it came out and did not hurt him. Then they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, “What word this is! For with authority and power He commands unclean spirits, and they came out.” And the report of Him went out into every place in the surrounding region.

Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she rose and served them.

When the sun was setting [the time now was that the sun was going down, and Jesus had been up all day long], all those who had any sick with various diseases brought them to Him, and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of God!” And He rebuked them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was Christ.

Jesus Christ had been up all day long, He served. And that night, when He would perhaps like to rest, He stayed up all night long to serve the people, to heal them, to cast out demons. Then, He went off into a desert place and the people asked Him to stay.

Another incident like this—it gives a picture of Jesus Christ and again, the heart and the mind of God the Father—is in Matthew 9, starting in verse 27. Now Jesus has just healed the ruler's daughter. Remember, the ruler's daughter was dead, and he said, "If you can, please heal my daughter." And Jesus commanded and the daughter was healed.

Matthew 9:27-38 And when Jesus departed there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, "Son of David, have mercy on us!" And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to Him, "Yes, Lord." Then He touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be to you." And their eyes were opened.

And Jesus sternly warned them, saying, "See that no one knows it." But when they had departed, they spread news about Him in all that country. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying, "It was never seen like this in Israel!" [this is that harsh God, brethren, that does not have any compassion and love] But the Pharisees said, "He casts out demons through the ruler of the demons."

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.

The term compassion here means "to be moved in one's inward parts." You see, Jesus could be moved in His inward parts for the people of God, and He

can be moved for you and for me as we come before Him. And He yearned to help the sufferers. The sheep were being scattered—they were being bullied, oppressed—and in the face of such problems, they were helpless, unable to rescue themselves or escape their tormentors.

Again, here we see the mind and the heart of God the Father being reflected through the compassion, through the teaching, through the love of Jesus Christ toward the people of God.

We will not turn there, but in Matthew 9:9-13, we see that Jesus Christ ate with tax collectors, and He ate with sinners, and those people that really needed help. Here we see again the desire of the Father is to call all mankind, everyone, to go where those people can be called at this time.

In Luke 7 we see a very touching, wonderful thing that Jesus Christ did. You see His perception, His understanding, and again, His compassion.

Luke 7:11-17 Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd. And when He came near the gate of the city, behold, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow.

And a large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, “Do not weep.” Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.” So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother.

Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, “A great prophet has risen up among us”; and, “God has visited His people.” And this report about Him went throughout all Judea and all the surrounding region.

Jesus Christ took one look and He sized up the situation immediately. Here was a widow whose only son had died. She loved him greatly. Now, there was no “safety net” in Israel—he knew that this woman would probably be

destitute in a very short time because she had no one to provide for her—so He sized up the situation. He walked right up to her and said, “Don’t cry.” He reached up and He touched the coffin, and he said, “Young man, arise!” And the man sat up and started to talk, and the crowd was stunned. At first, there was stark terror. No one had ever seen anything like this. And then they were filled with joy that Jesus Christ had done this. You see brethren, again, these little vignettes, these little pictures of Jesus Christ are telling you what God the Father is like.

John 13:14, the last scripture in this area, shows the heart of God the Father completely. We review this every Passover. He rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel, and girded Himself. And after that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Verses 14 and 15,

John 13:14-15 “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.”

Here we see the awesome God of the universe, the Creator God, who got down on His knees to serve His disciples. Here we see the heart of God the Father at work—the same concern, the same attitude of service. Brethren, God has a personal responsibility toward each of us individually. God has called us as separate individuals, we are all different in abilities, in personalities, in likes and dislikes. Jesus Christ is preparing a different office for each of us, and thus your Father in heaven is going to see that you and I are prepared properly, and to do so, from time to time, is going to require correction. I think we have to understand that this correction comes to perfect us, that we might be able to fulfill all that God has set aside for us to do. Please turn over to Hebrews 12, starting in verse 5.

Hebrews 12:5-11 And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons. “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.”

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening [in other words, if you will not take it, if you will not come under it and grow from it], of which we are all partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He [God the Father] for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterwards it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Brethren, we do not know what is going to be required of us in the near future. I think the simplistic attitude that we had in the past that we are all going to peacefully go to a place of safety and never have to go through trials while the rest of the world has to suffer, I do not think that is going to be accurate. Surely there is a place of safety, and certainly some are going, and I hope it is us, but God is going to test us, He is going to perfect us. You see, that is what we are here for, to be perfected, and that is His job as our Father, no question about it.

Now there is one more aspect of this.

Matthew 12:46-49 While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and His brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him. Then one said to Him, “Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You.” And He answered and said to the one who told Him, “Who is My mother and who are My brothers?” And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers!”

Something is being said here, brethren. It says that we are all family. We are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Age, race, separation by miles mean nothing. We are already part of God's Family because we are His disciples. We all have the same Father. Let us take a quick turn over to Romans 8 so you can all treat each other like family here, all be brothers and sisters.

Romans 8:14-17 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit [itself] bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him.

Brethren, we are joint heirs with Jesus Christ. We are all part of the Family of God no matter where we are. Race, color, sex, does not mean a thing. We all belong to God's Family.

Now why are the fathers of this world not turning their hearts toward the children? I do not know that I understand the reasons. Perhaps it is because we are selfish people now. We have too many material things, and we cannot picture giving up of ourselves in service to our family. Perhaps it is because of women's lib—perhaps there would not be women's lib if men did their jobs responsibly. I know that the entertainment industry is sending a message that is anti-solid family. It always has, it still does. We have comic strips like "Blondie and Dagwood." We have cartoons on television like "The Flintstones," where Wilma is the savior of the house and Fred Flintstone is the dolt that cannot come in out of the rain.

To me, one of the most devastating programs of this type is the program called, "Married With Children." We have Al Bundy who is the butt of every joke that his wife, son, and daughter can heap upon him. I am going to tell you, brethren, that God hates programming of this type. I know sometimes my grandchildren come over and they want to watch this, and I say, "That's not going on in this house!" God truly hates what this does to the family because it makes the father the laughingstock of the house.

You see, God set up a structure in Ephesians 5, showing the wife should submit and be gentle and be loving toward the husband. The husband, in turn, should be treating the family as Jesus Christ loved the church, to take care of them. He was to be respected, and programming of this type makes the father an archaic figure. He is disrespected, and this is something that just permeates our society.

The fathers of this world may not be turning their hearts toward the children, but we are fortunate in that our Father has turned His heart toward us, and that He wants us to turn our heart toward Him.

After all of this (so far this morning), why is it important that we have the right view of our Father? Brethren, how can we pray to someone we do not know? We are told to pray to God the Father. If He is just that mystical figure sitting at that throne that we do not understand, then we have a difficult time in our prayer life. We say, “Our Father, who is in heaven,” we just do not understand. The Father wants us to have an intimate relationship with Him. How can we emulate or imitate somebody we do not know and understand? It cannot be done.

How can we come before God’s throne boldly if we are terrified of Him, thinking that He is waiting to pounce on us, and if we do not know that He truly cares for us? Now in this world, you do not see a lot of respect being given, but that should not be so here because our Father in heaven needs all the respect that we can give Him. And I think we all understand this, even though the world teaches us just the opposite. How can we expect to become a member of the God Family if we cannot see the Father? It just is not going to be done.

Brethren, the fathers of this world may not know their children, and the children of this world may not know their fathers, but our Father *does* know us, and again, He truly wants us to know Him. Jesus Christ was the firstborn of many brethren. He came to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, to sacrifice Himself for those in this world that we all might be saved—and He also came to reveal the Father. Just before He ascended, He reminded us again. He said, “I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God,” reminding us that we have the exact same Father. There is not a

tremendous separation somewhere here. We have the exact same Father as Jesus Christ.

Why was the Father shown to us? It is a little bit of a repeat, but it is that we might establish the relationship we need to have with Him. It is that we might come to know that we are His children specifically so that He is a real Father to us, and that we might come to understand that He has a responsibility to raise us; and we have a responsibility to submit to Him, and to come under His authority and to make the changes that need to be made. He has shown to us that we might learn to think as He does with confidence, that we might emulate Him and become like Him in every way, and that we might allow Him to prepare us to save and to serve a world that is going to need our help desperately. You see, there is much more to it than just us.

What I am going to say as I draw to our conclusion here would be blasphemous in the churches of the world, but as we work at developing our relationship with God the Father, and we change and conduct ourselves to act as He would to the degree that we grow and overcome, it might rightly be said of us, as it was of Jesus Christ, that to see you is to see God the Father. And you see, this is alright in God's sight because this is exactly what He wants from us, that we will be just like Him.

Ken Spencer's sermon was touching, especially toward the end when he said, "You know, I'm a day late and a dollar short all the time," and I think sometimes this is why we do not think we have a good relationship with our Father—all of us feel that we are of such little value. But I really hope the message today helps us to realize that we *are* of value. You know, God values us very much. This is the reason the earth is here, and He paid the greatest price for us—His Son—because He holds us in tremendous value.

So for final scripture, I would like to have you turn over to Hebrews 13, verse 20, and I will give you that in conclusion.

Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete

in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well
pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory
forever and ever. Amen.