

SHOW US THE FATHER

JOHN 14:8

THE FATHERHOOD CRISIS



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

DAVID MURRAY
JUNE 12, 2022 (AM)

INTRODUCTION

Our culture's fatherhood crisis can be seen in both stories and statistics.

Nadia's Story

In Islam there are 99 names for Allah. Not one of them is "Father." I am from a family of six children. My father never showed us love. Whenever I heard of people speak about the love and support of their fathers, I had no idea what they meant. My father was an angry man. He abused us, especially my mother, emotionally and physically. She was beaten several times to within an inch of her life. Yet she put up with this in order to protect us children. I also remember the day when my father tried to kill my brother, forcing him to run away barefooted into the street.

When I was old enough, I left Iran so that I could be free of my father and have a better life. I ended up in the UK. I always had a negative view of men. I questioned why God had given men such power. I tried to be strong, yet I was depressed and tired of life (*I Couldn't Call God Father*, by Nadia).

Vince's Story

"As a man who has been fatherless almost all my life, I have found that defining masculinity is deceptively difficult. I didn't have someone around to demonstrate true and healthy manhood. My father's absence has been a source of grief and regret, but this sense of longing has driven me to God for answers, fulfillment, and sonship. He is my one faithful Father, my heavenly one" (*Nine Attributes of a Real Man*, Vince Miller)

Statistics

- Almost 25% (one in four) American children lives in a household without their biological dads.
- In the African American community, it's 50% (one in two).
- Paternal absence is the single greatest risk factor in teen girls becoming pregnant, boys ending up in prison, and kids ending up with mental illness.
- Girls and boys are much more likely to thrive when they have the benefit of a father's time, attention, discipline, and especially affection

How do we fix the Fatherhood crisis that is damaging so many individuals and our whole culture? The answer is God's Fatherhood. It helps us see where we've gone wrong, how to get it right, and how to heal those traumatized by their dads or the lack of them. Even if we've had the best Fathers, we can still get to know our heavenly Father better and enjoy a deeper more satisfying relationship with him.

BACKGROUND

We were made to know God as our Father. Our ultimate purpose is to be the loved and loving children of God. That's how Adam and Eve were made. That's what we've lost by sin and what Christianity restores. But how? How do we get to the Father? How do we know the Father? How can we become his sons and daughters? How can we enjoy a relationship with him. These were some of the Father problems and questions that Jesus's disciples had as well. In John 14:5-10 Jesus solves and answers them.



What is our Father problem?



1. WE HAVE A FATHER PROBLEM

Some of the disciples had father problems. Perhaps they'd had bad experiences at the hands of their earthly fathers. Whatever the cause, when Jesus spoke about them going to live in the Father's home (John 14:2-4), Thomas had questions (5). When Jesus answered by presenting himself as the only way they could come to the Father (6) and know the Father (7), Philip voiced serious reservations about this. He knew Jesus and wanted to be with him, but he wasn't sure who the Father was or whether he wanted to be with him. He turned to Jesus and said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us" (8). Philip seemed to fear that the Father was not like Jesus. Like many, Philip was attracted to the Son of God but not to his Father God. Like many, he feared that God the Father was a brooding, threatening, ominous figure who hid behind Jesus.

Jesus assured Phillip that rather than hiding the Father, he revealed the Father. He wasn't a cover for the Father but pulled back the covers on the Father. "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?" (9-10). What's the Father like? He's just like Jesus. Jesus makes him known (John 1:18; Col. 1:15; Heb 1:3).

So many spiritual problems stem from a distorted view of God as our Heavenly Father, most of which result from painful experiences of distorted earthly fatherhood. There are two main distortions of earthly fatherhood that damage us.

The Abusive Father

- *Physical abuse*: Not only violent attacks but excessively violent discipline.
- *Verbal abuse*: Belittling, demeaning, and dehumanizing words.
- *Psychological abuse*: Controlling through silence, dictatorial intimidation, or perfectionistic expectations.
- *Sexual abuse*: Invasion of personal privacy for sexual gratification, the most damaging of all abuse.

The Absent Father

- *Physical absence*: Your father left your family, or effectively left by too much time on work, friends, hobbies, etc.
- *Emotional absence*: Present but absent, silent, distant, uninvolved. No words or actions of loving affirmation.
- *Spiritual absence*: Little to no involvement in the spiritual welfare of the children.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Lament: If you are a victim of abuse or abandonment, you are not to blame. It's not your fault. You should be outraged and angry over the abuse and absence you've suffered. We grieve and weep with you. We come alongside you with sympathy. You've been traumatized and your view of yourself, your world, and your God have been damaged.

Repent: If you've sinned as a Dad, repent, ask for forgiveness from your children, and start over. It does not matter how old you are or how long ago it happened. Repentance is not just saying sorry, it's producing fruits of repentance. It's doing the opposite of what you've done. Provide care and love where there was abuse and violence. Provide presence where there was absence. Provide not only dollars but affection, appreciation, and encouragement. Your children are crying out to you "Show us the Father."



Replace: There are single mothers in our church and in our community. We do not shame them or shun them. We want to step in to help them, to provide Fatherly care, examples, and mentoring. The answer to the Fatherhood problem is not to abandon the whole idea as some women are doing but to step into the gap as replacement dads. Single moms, do not give up in despair. You are doing the very best you can. Children raised without dads can turn out fine. God overrules and you can point your children to a Father in heaven who will never forsake them.

OUR FATHERHOOD CRISIS
IS A SPIRITUAL CRISIS.
WITH A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION



What is the spiritual solution?



2. JESUS HAS A FATHER SOLUTION

It's definitely easier to understand God's Fatherhood if we've had good earthly fathers. So what do we do when we've had wrong and damaging views and experiences of fatherhood? Do we give up on that as just too painful to even think about? That's not what Jesus did with his disciples, and it should not be what we do either. No matter how bad our experience of earthly fatherhood was (is), the remedy is not less fatherhood but more of God's Fatherhood. That's what we want to provide in this sermon series, "Show us the Father."

We all need more knowledge of God the Father and more experience of God's Fatherhood. There are two ways to this: (1) Passages and verses which reveal God's Fatherhood directly, and (2) passages and verses which reveal God's Fatherhood indirectly, through Jesus. So we'll be seeing that God's Fatherhood means:

- **Design for Creatures** (Deut. 32:6; Ps. 139)
- **Love for the Loveless** (1 John 3:1-3)
- **Compassion for the Hurting** (Deuteronomy 1:31; Ps 103:13-14; Jer. 31:20)
- **Comfort for Sufferers** (Ps. 68:5-6; 2 Cor. 1:3-4)
- **Provision for the Poor** (Mat. 6:8; Phil. 4:19)
- **Discipline for the Disobedient** (Heb. 12:6)
- **Assurance for Doubters** (Rom. 8:15)
- **Peace for the Anxious** (Matt. 6:25-26)
- **Justice for the Oppressed** (Ps. 37:34; Rom. 12:19)
- **Grace for the Prodigals** (Luke 15:20-24)
- **Forgiveness for the Bitter** (Matt. 6:14-15)
- **Security for the Insecure** (John 10:29)
- **Wisdom for the Foolish** (Proverbs)
- **Faithfulness for the Unfaithful** (Lam 3:23)
- **Authority for the Lawless** (Matt. 5:17-18)
- **An Ear for the Crying** (Matt. 6:9)
- **Help for the Helpless** (Heb. 4:16)
- **A Giver for Receivers** (Matt. 6:13; James)
- **Life for the Dead** (John 5:21)
- **Presence for the Abandoned** (Rom. 8:39)
- **Acceptance for the Imperfect** (2 Cor. 6:18-18)
- **Worship for Worshippers** (John 4:23)
- **A Home for the Homeless** (John 14:1-3)
- **Sacrifice for the Undeserving** (Romans 8:32)

That's a Father solution that could solve our Fatherhood crisis!



CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

If you had a good earthly father, thank God that he showed you the Father. "I have only ever had a good father. Timothy Beaty is gentle, wise, affectionate, and regularly expresses pride for his children. We laugh at the same lines in Seinfeld; he taught me how to identify bird calls. To this day, I hold to the irrational belief that there is no better man than him walking the face of the earth. Because I have a good biological father, it has been easy to believe that I have a good heavenly Father. Earthly things, though imperfect, reveal the deeper truth about heavenly things. The typology has worked out for me. I do not take this for granted" (Katelyn Beaty).

If you had a bad earthly father, let Jesus show you his and your Heavenly Father. Nadia came to believe in Jesus but faced an immediate problem: "After believing there was a great challenge awaiting me. I had to accept God as my Father. In my mind, "Father" was not a word of honor toward the God I had come to know. "Mother" would have felt like a much better word. But God wanted to reveal himself to me. And he did so with complete patience and gentleness.

As I studied the Bible, I saw the grace and love of the Father. As I prayed, I felt the attention of the Father. As I worshiped, I felt the embrace of the Father. He healed my past, my present, and my future. He has transformed me. He even enabled me to truly forgive my earthly father. I used to hate the word "Father," but today I worship God the Father with great love and passion. I worship Jesus Christ as Lord, the One who has saved my soul. And I love to walk in the Spirit, who is always with me.

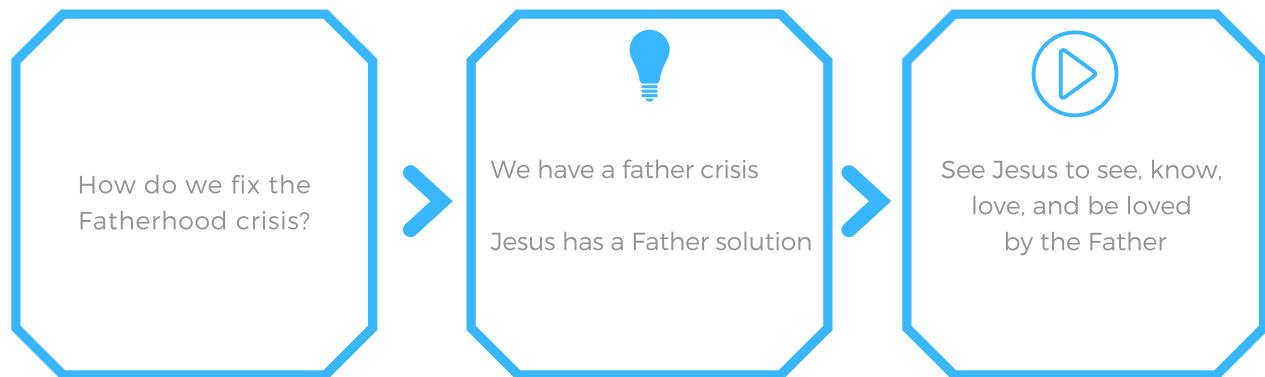
Today I have the privilege of being part of Elam Ministries's women's team, and I've had the chance to teach numerous women just like me. I never knew my story would affect so many other lives. I've had the chance to tell hundreds of Iranian women what the Father has done in my life. I speak of the Father's authority, the Father's attention, the Father's generosity, the Father's faithfulness, and the Father's love.

Recently, after sharing my story at a conference for women from Iran, a lady named Haleh approached me in tears. Her father was just like mine. Unsurprisingly, Haleh couldn't see God as Father. But after much conversation and prayer, she was finally able to call on God as her Father. It was so moving to see. The following day Haleh sang a new song to God about his Fatherhood, and like a little girl she danced before her Daddy."

LIKE SON, LIKE FATHER
LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

- **Jesus:** Jesus is the only perfect Son of the perfect Father. In that perfect Father-Son relationship, we see the relationship we lost by sin, that we are regaining through Jesus, and that will be perfected in our perfect heavenly home. Read the Gospel of John looking for that perfect Father-Son model to inspire you.
- **Men:** Let's turn from our culture's false models of fatherhood, and the demeaning of fatherhood, and show our families, our church family, and our community what biblical fatherhood looks like.
- **Women:** Single women, pray and look for men who show the Father in their words and actions. Married women, pray for your husbands to be such Father-revealing fathers and encourage them when they do.
- **Prayer:** "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways do you see the effects of the fatherhood crisis in our culture?
2. How have your experiences of fatherhood affected your view of God (for good and bad)?
3. Who do you know with an absent or abusive father that you could show the Father to?
4. Which of the multiple ways God fathers us is most meaningful to you?
5. What can you learn about God's fatherhood from his Fatherhood of Israel in the OT?
6. Who can you disciple with this message and how?

First Byron Christian Reformed Church
8541 Byron Center Ave SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
Phone: (616) 878-9768
www.firstbyroncrc.org

Pastor David Murray
www.HeadHeartHand.org
www.thestorychanger.life