

Ascension and Pentecost

understanding our Father

AIMS

To help us understand better that the One we are praying to is a loving Father who delights in us and wants the very best for us. You can use this with a group or individually.

INTRODUCTION

We are so used to addressing God as "Our Father" that we probably don't realise how profoundly shocking this concept was to Jesus' original hearers.

In the Old Testament, God was sometimes referred to as the Father of the nation of Israel but there was no concept of an individual having a father-child relationship with Him. Then Jesus comes along and refers to God as "Abba", the expression a child would use. It's probably better translated "Daddy" and implies a close, intimate relationship between God and His children.

Yet for some of us the concept of "father" is a difficult one. We may never have known our earthly father or may have had bad experiences of our fathers. None of us had perfect fathers. The result is that we find it difficult to know what God is really like as our 'Heavenly Daddy'. We so easily assume He must be like our earthly fathers were. But He isn't.

Many have found the following declaration really helpful. Read it out together.

I RENOUNCE THE LIE THAT MY MY FATHER GOD IS:

distant and uninterested in me.

insensitive and uncaring.

stern and demanding.
(see

passive and cold.

absent or too busy for me.

impatient, angry or never
satisfied with what I do.

mean, cruel or abusive.

trying to take all the fun out of life.

I JOYFULLY ACCEPT THE TRUTH THAT FATHER GOD IS:

intimate and involved
(see Psalm 139:1-18).

kind and compassionate
(see Psalm 103:8-14).

accepting and filled with joy and love
Romans 15:7; Zephaniah 3:17).

warm and affectionate (see Isaiah 40:11;
Hosea 11:3, 4).

always with me and eager to be with me
(see Hebrews 13:5; Jeremiah 31:20;
Ezekiel 34:11-16).

patient and slow to anger and
delights in those who put their hope in
His unfailing love (see Exodus 34:6; 2
Peter 3:9, Psalm 147:11).

loving and gentle and protective (see
Jeremiah 31:3; Isaiah 42:3; Psalm 18:2).

trustworthy and wants to give me a full
life; His will is good, perfect and

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	acceptable for me (see Lamentations 3:22, 23; John 10:10; Romans 12:1-2).
controlling or manipulative.	full of grace and mercy, and gives me freedom to fail (see Hebrews 4:15, 16; Luke 15:11-16).
condemning or unforgiving.	tender-hearted and forgiving; His heart and arms are always open to me (see Psalm 130:1-4; Luke 15:17-24).
nit-picking or a demanding perfectionist. me	committed to my growth and proud of as His growing child (see Romans 8:28, 29; Hebrews 12:5-11; 2 Corinthians 7:14).

I Am the Apple of His Eye!

Ask the group:

Which of those declarations is your favourite?

Which do you find most surprising? (Look up the Bible references and see what they say)

Prayer

Loving God, whatever our experiences of earthly fathers, help us to know you as the wonderful, loving, accepting Daddy to us that you are. Amen.

EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

Acknowledgements

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You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

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If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk