

FAMILY EVALUATION

TAKING A FRESH LOOK AT HOW OUR GOD CONCEPT IS FORMED

Forgiveness is the key that will set us free to be whole and receive the Father's love. This, in turn, will set us free to love others and build healthy, mature relationships. The goal of this evaluation is to point out areas of unforgiveness we have toward our parents so that forgiveness can be extended.

WHAT IS THE "GOD CONCEPT"?

A person's "God Concept" is that combination of images, feelings, and thoughts that forms our understanding of who God is. It is the lens through which one sees God and, fortunately or unfortunately, the lens through which one believes God sees him or her. Resulting from our experience with our own parents, the Holy Spirit continually seeks to correct these misconceptions, with completeness attained only when we see Jesus in heaven. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. (1 Corinthians 13:12) However, the nature of the "God Concept" acquired in childhood tends to attract a person to God or repel them from God, and it affects the comfort and productivity of the person's life.

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

No one interacts with God as he really is. Each of us interacts with God through the concept we have of Him. God desires to progressively reveal to us who He really is! This worksheet will help point out areas from our family of origin that affect our view of who God is. Other than one's self-concept, no other set of ideas exerts such a powerful influence on the believer's life as his/her God Concept. The total life experience is colored by the way one views God and the way one believes God views him/her. In one's spiritual life, it is the difference between living a life of duty or discovery. Do you regard God as the angry judge who punishes or a loving Father who rewards obedience? In one's emotional life it is the difference between living in fear or living in love. In one's social life it is the difference between feeling threatened or secure with other people. In one's physical life it is the difference between living under the tyranny of stress or experiencing the peace of God; Jesus is the prince of peace.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN "GOD CONCEPT"

Answer the following questions honestly. Ask the Holy Spirit to stir your memory. The goal of this exercise is not to be critical of our parents but to discover more about whom we perceive God to be. All hurts and disappointments from the past must be squarely faced. Once the hurts are honestly faced, forgiveness can be extended and Father's grace is released to change and heal our hearts.

IF A PARENT WAS ABSENT OR NOT PRESENT IN YOUR LIFE

If you did not have a relationship with your father or mother, please complete this evaluation based on any significant father or mother figure in your life (such as a step-parent, grandparent, guardian, or another person who played a parental role). If you did not have any consistent parental figure, take time to reflect on how the absence itself has impacted you. Consider how the lack of that parent may have shaped your understanding of God. The absence of a parent can influence your "God Concept" just as deeply as their presence.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FATHER:

1. List 5 positive qualities of your father:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

2. List 5 negative qualities of your father:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

3. Circle all of the following words describe the way that you view your father:

compassionate difficult to please supportive indifferent threatening condemning
absent angry strong understanding punishing too busy controlling kind-hearted
distant harsh thoughtful gentle

4. How did your father communicate his love to you? Did you feel his love emotionally?

What emotions did your father express openly? How did he express them?

5. How did he love your mother? Did you feel secure in your parents' love for each other?

6. Did you feel that your father understood you? Describe how you and your father communicated.

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FATHER:

7. How did he discipline you? Was his discipline fair or unfair? Did he discipline out of love or out of anger? Did he have favorites in the family? Who were they?

8. How was he a faithful material provider? How was he faithful to his words and promises?

9. Was he faithful to your mother?

10. What was the most pleasant experience you had with your father? What was the most unpleasant experience you had with your father? List any painful memories that you have about your father. Was he addicted to any drugs or alcohol? If so, what are your feelings about that?

11. How did you feel that you had to earn your father's acceptance and approval? Did your father keep free of bitterness and resentment?

12. Was your father sexually pure towards you? If no, write a paragraph describing how you feel about that. Did your father ever physically abuse you?

13. Did he take an interest in the things in which you were involved in as a child? Did you have fun with your dad while you were growing up?

14. Did he willing and patiently answer your questions? Did he seek to control or manipulate anyone in the family? How?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FATHER:

15. What is/was your father's goal in life? In what ways are you like your father? In what ways are you different from your father?

16. How did you feel about your father as a child through age 10?

From age 11-18?

From age 18 to present?

17. Do you hate or resent him for anything? Have you forgiven him of all his faults and failures? Do you blame him for the way you are?

CONSIDER YOUR MOTHER

THERE IS NO ONE LIKE MOM! Understanding mothering has much more to do with understanding God, people, and how we are to relate to others than it has to do with gender. Most people want a comfortable, mutually satisfying friendship with that very significant person in our life—our mother. But the reality generally falls short of the ideal. You may experience “mother trouble” in several areas.

How we were mothered drastically impacts all areas of your life. Not only do we learn our patterns of intimacy, relating, and separateness from mother, but we also learn ideals, grief and loss, and many of the other components that make up our “emotional IQ” -- that part of us that guarantees whether or not we will be successful at love, work, and relationships. In short, the following two realities largely determine our emotional development:

1. How we were mothered
2. How we have responded to that mothering

It is mother who gives birth and life to the infant. It is in her arms that we learn safety and trust, assuring we are not alone in the world. Indeed, for most of us, mothering has something to do with a caring connection. The Psalmist said it this way: “Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you even at my mother's breast.” (Psalms 22:9) For as long as humankind has been on the earth, we have associated mothering with trust and nurture. Yet many have not received nurture and trust from their mothers. Instead of connecting safely to their mothers, they have found an ongoing emptiness and void in their lives.

CHECK THE STATEMENTS THAT APPLY TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR MOTHER. YOU MAY FEEL:

- unable to communicate with her
- her lack of respect of your choices and values
- her refusal to accept your own family and friends
- a lack of freedom to have a separate life without losing her love
- disconnected from and misunderstood by her
- difficulty in saying "no" and confronting her
- you have to hide your real self and be perfect
- responsible to make her think that she is perfect
- guilt when you don't take care of her as she wants you to
- disillusionment and conflict over her interactions with your spouse
- guilt over not living up to her expectations and wishes
- sorrow that she can't seem to comprehend your pain
- act childlike in her presence
- frustration over her seeming self-absorption
- feel like cringing when she treats your children in familiar hurtful ways
- discouraged that this list is so long

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MOTHER:

1. List 5 positive qualities of your mother.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
2. List 5 negative qualities of your mother.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
3. How did your mother show her love and respect for your father?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MOTHER:

4. Did she have favorites in the family? How did that make you feel?

5. How did her words to you make you feel?

6. Describe the kind of communication your mother and father had. In what areas could they have improved in? What emotions did your mother express openly? How did she express them?

7. Did your parents outwardly show love and affection to each other?

8. Were/are you able to be open and honest with your mother and talk freely with her? Did you feel that she understood you?

9. Did she seek to control or manipulate anyone in the family?

10. Did your mother worry?

11. Did your mother keep free of bitterness and resentment?

12. Describe the atmosphere of your home. Was it a safe place?

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MOTHER:

13. Was your mother faithful to your father?

14. Was your mother sexually pure towards you? Did your mother ever physically abuse you?

15. What was the most pleasant experience you had with your mother? What was the most unpleasant experience you had with your mother? List any painful memories that you have about your mother. Was she addicted to drugs or alcohol?

16. What is/was your mother's goal in life? In what ways are you like your mother? In what ways are you different from your mother?

17. How did you feel about your mother as a child through age 10?

From age 11-18?

From age 18 to present?

17. Have you forgiven her for all her faults, shortcomings and failures? Do you hate or resent her for anything? Do you blame her for the way you are?

PRACTICAL STEPS TO TAKE TOWARDS HEALING:

Exodus 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you."

Honoring your parents implies 5 things:

1. BE GRATEFUL & ACCEPT THEM FOR WHO THEY ARE.
2. FORGIVE THEM FOR ALL THEIR FAULTS, HURTS, AND FAILURES.
3. COMMUNICATE YOUR LOVE & ACCEPTANCE TO THEM ON AN ONGOING BASIS.
4. In PRAYER, ask Jesus to come and heal the hurts of the past according to Luke 4:18. Jesus will come and fill you with a revelation of the Father's love.
5. Go through the above questions again and look for all the ways that our Heavenly Father is indeed a PERFECT FATHER and a PERFECT MOTHER!

Your concept of your earthly father deeply molds your concept of the heavenly Father. Your response to your mother sets the pattern for relationships in your life. We are going to ask Jesus to heal all the wrong ideas we have about our Heavenly Father and replace it with a loving revelation of Himself.

FOR FURTHER THOUGHT

In what ways might the negative qualities you identified in Question 2 for your father and mother be influencing your choice of a girlfriend or boyfriend? Consider both patterns you may be drawn toward and those you may be trying to avoid.

Exodus 34:6-7 reveals to us the awesome truth that our own sin will influence our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren down to the fourth generation. By God's grace and power, we can break the destructive cycle of sin and pass on a wholesome inheritance to our progeny.