

### TAKEAWAY:

Earthly fathers are called to reflect the loving, disciplined, and gracious fatherhood of God-by grace, not perfection.

### INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- Share one characteristic of a father (your own or another) that **positively** shaped you.
- Share a fun moment that remind you of your father or a father figure in your life.
- When you do you think of when you hear the words, Father's Day?

### UNDERSTANDING:

Have a group member read Ephesians 6:1-4

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- **Read Ephesians 6:4.** What does it mean for fathers to exercise authority "under God's authority"? How does this guard against both harshness and passivity?
- **In the sermon we heard, "sinful anger breeds resentment, not obedience." How have you witnessed this?** What's the difference between righteous discipline and sinful anger?
- **What does it mean that "discipline is formative, not punitive"?** How does this change the goal of correction in the home?
- **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9.** What does this passage teach about the rhythm and context of spiritual instruction? How can fathers (and mothers) apply this today?

### APPLICATION:

- **For fathers in the group:** Where have you been tempted to use authority selfishly or inconsistently? What would repentance and change look like?
- How does understanding God's patience and grace toward us as His children shape the way we parent our own children?
- **For those who had absent, abusive, or passive fathers:** How does the truth of God as our "perfect Father" bring healing? How can the church help in this?

### GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

**Living and Learning—Being a Disciple while Discipling your Kids:** Being a dad or mom is the most important and longest discipleship relationship you'll ever have. It's also the only job you'll ever have that by the time you're fully qualified you're unemployed. That is, each stage of parenting is unique and (if you have multiple kids) parenting each child has its unique elements. Parenting teenagers is uniquely different from parenting preteens and all of this is a totally different dynamic when you have adult kids—whether they're acting maturely and godly or immaturely and ungodly.

- What parenting struggles or victories have you experienced that you're comfortable sharing with us for praise, advice, or prayer?
- How does your relationship with God our heavenly Father inform your parenting style on earth? How did/does your upbringing and interaction with your dad and mom inform your parenting style?
- Discuss the phrase in Eph 6:1, "honor your parents in the Lord."
- In your household, how are your parenting roles different between the dad and the mom? In what ways do you share the load? How do you handle discipline issues? How has discipline dynamics varied in your house given the age of your children? Single parents, what insights do you have to share with us?
- If your "parenting" role today is also as a grandparent or great-grandparent, apply the above thoughts and questions to that area in your life.

**Divine Adoption:** Read Romans 8:12-17; One of the most profound theological truths undergirding the entire enterprise of Christian parenting is the doctrine of adoption. The believer is radically transferred from the domain of darkness, legally and relationally brought into the household of God, and given the Spirit of adoption by whom they cry, "Abba! Father!". If a man's primary, defining identity is that of an adopted, deeply loved, and fully forgiven child of the Creator, this glorious reality will inevitably and drastically dictate how he parents his own biological or adopted children.

- How can a father's tragic failure to deeply internalize his own identity as a beloved, fully accepted child of God lead to a parenting style characterized by chronic anxiety, oppressive control, or a relentless demand for performance?
- In what specific, measurable ways does daily meditation on the unmerited grace you receive from the Heavenly Father directly alter the metric by which you measure your children's behavioral successes and moral failures?
- If God the Father continuously pursues His rebellious children with an infinite, steadfast love, how should this divine attribute inform a parent's response to an older child or teenager who is experiencing a prolonged season of spiritual wandering?
- The doctrine of adoption demolishes the paradigm of performance-based parenting. In a performance-based home, love and approval are distributed as rewards for compliance and withdrawn as punishments for failure. However, because the father himself has been adopted by God unconditionally—not based on his own righteousness, but entirely upon the righteousness of Christ—he is compelled to extend that same unconditional love to his children. This theological framework frees the father from the crushing burden of attempting to be his child's savior. He recognizes that he is merely a conduit of the Heavenly Father's love, pointing his children past his own flawed humanity toward the perfect, inexhaustible love of the Triune God.

### **Quotes:**

- "It is not the will of God that parents, in the exercise of kindness, shall spare and corrupt their children. Let their conduct towards their children be at once mild and considerate, so as to guide them in the fear of the Lord, and correct them also when they go astray. That age is so apt to become wanton, that it requires frequent admonition and restraint." John Calvin
- "Some wrongly say, 'Do not teach your children, they'll be converted in God's own time, if it be His purpose. Therefore leave them to run wild in the streets.' Well, people who do that will certainly both sin against the child and the Lord Jesus. We might as well say, 'If that patch of ground over

there is to grow a harvest, God will do it if it's God's good pleasure. Therefore, leave it and let the weeds [grow]."<sup>1</sup> Charles Spurgeon

- J.I. Packer: "Everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God." He also states, "If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all."

### **Individual Application:**

- **For Fathers:** Plan one intentional, distraction-free conversation with each of your children this week. Ask them about their heart, not just their behavior.
- **For All:** Pray specifically for the fathers in your church and community—especially single dads, new dads, and those struggling.
- **For the Fatherless:** Reflect on Psalm 68:5 and Psalm 103:13. Journal about how God has been a Father to you, and thank Him for His faithful care.
- **For the Church:** Consider how your small group or church can better support and equip fathers in discipleship and leadership.

### **PRAYER:**

- For parents to lead with grace and dependence on God
- For children to grow in the knowledge and love of Christ
- For those grieving, struggling, or longing in their family stories
- For the church to be a family that reflects God's fatherly love