

Mothers and Fathers

1 Corinthians 4:15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.

There are many people who would offer us opinions on how to live our life, but relatively few who genuinely care about us.

God wants his Kingdom to be filled with those who express His motherly and fatherly heart to others.

It starts with understanding the nature of God. He's Father God.

Father God created humans in his likeness - male and female. Therefore the characteristics of God as Father include his maternal instincts too.

Psalms 91 says "He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge ..."

Matt. 23:37: "how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings,"

In Deut. 32 God is pictured as a mother eagle - pushing the birds out the nest, but then swooping down to scoop them up if they fail to flap.

"[God] guarded [Jacob] as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft." Deuteronomy 32:10-11

In Hosea 13:8 God is pictured as like a mother bear, ready to attack when her family is at risk.

Hosea 13:8 – "Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open," says the Lord.

But human imagery too: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I [God] will not forget you!" (Isa. 49:15)

Father images:

- Psalm 103:13: "The Lord is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him."
- Deuteronomy 1:31: "There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

Best-known parable is the Prodigal son. The father filled with compassion runs towards his wayward son.

Put away the Victorian stereotypes of “father”. He’s Abba Father. No fear.

Being a mother or father in God’s Kingdom is to express his heart.

How do we grow in this?

1. SEEING beyond yourself

God so loved the world. He GAVE.

Phil 2:20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.

Tim displayed Paul’s fatherly heart. Others welfare.

Mary the mother of Jesus at a wedding in Cana. She’s reading the room- spotting the problem- no wine! She brings the problems to Jesus. To see is to pray and bring stuff to those who can help.

Joy: Seeing God at work. Seeing people grow.

Danger: self-care gets neglected. Home, marriage. Need friends who care for you.

2. It’s work

Labouring. Emotional rollercoaster.

Galatians 4:19 My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

It’s costly. It’s sacrificial. It’s painful, you get hurt. Success is more than matched by perplexing thoughts.

1 Thess 2:11-12 For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God,

Sometimes you encourage when you should have comforted, or comfort when you should have urged.

Joy: labour produces life. Creation ends in rest.

Danger: lose perspective. All about the pain. Get discouraged when people don’t respond.

3. Releasing

True leadership doesn’t subjugate - or cause dependency - it releases.

Psalm 45:16 Your sons will take the place of your fathers; you will make them princes throughout the land.

Good parenting celebrates when your children go way beyond you.

Joy is found in seeing younger believers grow in Christ

Questions

1. Fathers and Mothers. Who have been some of the biggest positive influences in your Christian life? What characteristics do/did they have?
2. Stereotypes of God as Father. How do we ensure we don't limit our view of God to our own experience. What are some of the stereotypes you think we need to avoid?
3. How does feeding on God's fatherliness help us to display his love to others?
4. Seeing, Labouring, Releasing. Which of these do you find the biggest challenge?
5. Take a moment to think about who God has brought into your life who you can show his parental care to. Does this include people beyond church?