

Family Worship Guide – Week 24

READ

This week as we continue the sermon series entitled “The Gospel and the Next Generation”, we shift our focus to the fatherhood of God. There are two main reasons why this topic has been included in this series. First, Scripture alludes to the fact that the task of every human father is to be for his children an image of the Father in heaven. Every earthly father should strive to live in such a way that his children are able to see what God the Father is like. Secondly, this topic is particularly significant to those who have been raised without a father present in the home or without a Christian father. God offers Himself as Father - the perfect Father - to anyone who will accept the gift of adoption by trusting in Christ. We are His children, and He has lavished His love on us.

Read 1 John 3:1-3.

Within these verses there are five amazing truths we are going to briefly highlight.

- 1) God is the father of those who have placed their faith in Jesus (v. 1). This is good news! Each of us should be thankful for the earthly father God has graciously given to us, but not even the best earthly father can compare to our heavenly father. He is always faithful, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.
- 2) As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we have been given the privilege of being called children of God (v. 1). Wow! Think about this. Children of famous celebrities or athletes probably think it's pretty cool to be known as the son or daughter of “so-and-so,” but as followers of Christ we have them all beat. We aren't the sons or daughters of some guy that can dunk a basketball or girl that can sing a song, instead we are the sons and daughters of the God of the universe!
- 3) The love of our heavenly father for us is great (v. 1). Verse one doesn't simply say that God the Father loves us. Instead, it describes the intensity of the Father's love for His children. It says His love for His children is “great”. We never have to doubt, even for an instant, God's love for us. In Christ His love is perfect. His love is never ending. His love is unconditional. It is in fact great.
- 4) Children of God are different from children of the world (v. 1, 3). Since we have experienced the love of God in Christ, we are compelled to live differently than the world. Oftentimes this means that the world will not understand us or agree with us. Just as the world did not know and agree with God our Father, so oftentimes the world will do the same to His children.
- 5) There is coming a day when we will be like our Heavenly Father (v. 2, 3). All children resemble their father in some respect. Small children in particular seek to imitate their dads. As God's children, we too will be like our Father when Christ returns in the future.

Questions:

Why is it important to remember that we are God's children?

What difference should this make in our relationship with God? What difference should this make in our relationship with our own parents?

How does the fact that God is a loving father impact how you relate to Him?

Bottom Line: Through Christ, we have the privilege of being called children of God.

PRAY

In the Fall of 2009 as we studied together through the book of *James*, dozens of the families at The Church at Brook Hills began to 'care for the orphans' by opening their homes for children in the Foster Care system in the Birmingham area. This week, we are praying for those families, other families who have adopted, children in the Foster Care system, and orphans who still need a loving Christian home.

SING

The love of our heavenly Father is astounding, so much so that we aren't even able to fully comprehend it. And better yet, we can't be separated from it. Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39, “For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This kind of love is deep. Life-changing even. It's because of this kind of love that we are able to love in the first place. It motivates us to show the whole world what it's like.

As we worship together, let's celebrate through music by singing 'This Love' written by Mandi Mapes. In this song, Mandi paints a beautiful picture of adoption and the love found between a parent and child. It's a love that is permanent and real. It's a wonderful depiction of Christ's love for us. We have been adopted and are no longer strangers, but children of God.

MEMORIZE

1 John 1:3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

SUGGESTIONS

These suggestions were created by the age-group ministry leaders as a way to help parents better communicate the biblical truths discussed in the Family Worship Guide. These suggestions are intended to help parents facilitate God-centered discussions with their children. Parents should prayerfully use these suggestions, and any other means necessary, to help their children discover the truths of God's word and worship Him together.

Preschool

- Before you begin, locate a family photo that you can share with your child.
- Read 1 John 3:1.
- Explain to your preschooler that God's love for us is huge. He created us and loves us. God created you and gave you an earthly family. We are all part of that family here on earth.
- Show the family portrait to your preschooler. Explain to your child that this is a picture of their earthly family. Tell them that you want to ask some questions about them from the photo. Ask the following questions: Do you know who you are in this photo? What is your name? Are you a son or daughter? Am I your Mom or Dad? Are you a brother or sister?
- God loves us and we are special to Him. But, you are also special to your heavenly Father, who is God. That's why God sent Jesus. He loved us so much that He sent His only Son, from heaven to earth to save us from our sins.
- Ask them if they have the same color eyes as Mom or Dad? How about the same color hair? Sometimes children will often look like their parents. The Bible tells us that we are created in God's image. This means you are His child, too. It means you can become like Him, so that others will see God in you. He wants all of us to know Him and to follow His plans for us. When we do this, then our life here on earth will look more like Him, just like some children look a lot like their earthly Mom and Dad.
- Re-read 1John 3:1 together.
- Pray and thank God for being our Heavenly Father. Thank Father God for loving us so much and for sending Jesus.

Children

- Read 1 John 3:1-3.
- Ask you child these questions: What is love? How would you describe it? What could you do to show someone else that you love them?
- The greatest demonstration of love is to accept someone just like they are, to care for them, and to even give them a place in your home.
- This is sometimes called adoption – you take someone to be part of your family and actually give them your name.
- Do you know anyone who has been adopted? Was adoption dependent on the child being good or on the love and actions of the parents? It was the parents – the parents did whatever was required to adopt the child and bring them home)
- God, our heavenly Father, willingly adopts anyone who will receive salvation.
- We are God's beloved children when we become Christ-followers, and one day we will get to live in God's home (new heaven and new earth) with Him. We will also be made perfect and be without sin just as God is perfect.
- That is amazing, and it really is the story of the gospel, a word which actually means good news. Is adoption into God's family good news to you?
- Family activity: Make an acrostic of the word ADOPTION. Try to use words that describe God's great love or the benefits that come from adoption as children of God. Additional verses that may help you are Romans 8:14-17. Here are some ideas to get you started:
 - A (abundant, abounding, Abba Father)
 - D (daddy, dearly loved)
 - O (offered freely)
 - P (pure, perfect, patient)

- T (tender, trustworthy)
- I (inherit eternal life, included in God's family)
- O (overcome death)
- N (never ending)
- To end, pray and thank God for the great blessing of being His dearly loved children.

Students

- Prior to your family worship time, obtain four or five images of people or places that would be viewed as negative by your children. Examples may include foods they do not like, places they would not want to travel to, or even people that might be viewed as enemies (e.g. Osama Bin Laden).
- After reading I John 3:1-3, ask your students to share about different things that they love. Examples may range from family to desserts. Be sure to let your students share fully. You may interject things like past vacations or hobbies that you know they enjoy. Now ask them to define love. Without yet giving them an accurate definition of love, share the pictures you obtained with them and ask them if they could ever *love* these things. Share the items in an order of significance (ex. broccoli would come before Bin Laden). Now read Romans 5:6-11. Ask your students when God began loving us (while we were weak, sinful, and His enemies). Ask them if this changes their definition of love. Understanding that love is a self-sacrificing commitment to care for someone else, ask your students if it surprises them that God loves them in this way (much like it would be for someone to say they loved a terrorist). Read I John 4:7-8. Ask them, "If God has loved us in this way, how does this change how and who we are to love?"
- A great way to begin to see God change your heart about loving others, as He has loved us as a father, is to pray for people who are difficult to love. Ask your students to write down the name of a difficult person to love and place the name where they will see it daily. Encourage them to pray for that person each time they see their name, and to thank God for loving them as a perfect father. Be sure to write the name of a person yourself, students will always be more impacted by what they *see* you do than what they *hear* you say.

Lives/Church

This week's prayer highlight focuses on the fatherhood of God. First, Scripture intimates that every earthly father should strive to live in such a way that his children see what God the Father is like. Secondly, this topic is particularly significant to those who have been raised without a father or without a Christian father. God offers Himself as Father - the perfect father - to anyone who will accept the gift of adoption by trusting in Christ. As you pray this week, ask God to help you better comprehend and embrace the loving care of and the spiritual blessings from your heavenly Father. Finally, pray that fathers across our church family would whole-heartedly strive to be for their children an image of the Father in heaven.

Local

Local Church: Antioch Missionary Baptist Church - Q.E. Hammonds

Focus: Adoption/Foster Care - pray for Birmingham area children who need a permanent home and/or are in the foster care system.

Monday: Pray that orphans in Birmingham will sense the Lord's protection, provision, and presence. Pray for loving, safe Christian homes for every orphan.

Tuesday: Pray for Foster Care and Adoption agencies such as DHR, AL Baptist Children's Home, and Lifeline. Pray for financial support, case workers and strengthening of relationships between the Church and orphan care agencies.

Wednesday: Pray that more Christians will open up the hearts and homes to care for children in foster care. Pray that Christ followers will come alongside foster families to provide support.

Thursday: Pray for adoptive and foster families as they welcome and bring children into their homes. Pray for wisdom, patience, compassion, and grace as they deal with physical, mental and emotional wounds and scars.

Friday: Pray for the salvation of the children in foster care homes and orphanages and their parents. Pray that in spite of the difficult situations, they would all understand the hope and good news in the gospel.

Saturday: Pray for healing in the hearts, minds, and bodies of the children in foster care and orphanages. Pray that they would find their identity and security in a relationship with God.

Scripture Memory

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

1 John 1:3

This Love

by Mandi Mapes

Verse 1:

C G F C G F
I've never felt this way before
C G F C G F
Funny how you found your way to my door
C G F C G F
and suddenly my prayers are coming true
C G F C G F
and these arms are not letting go of you

Chorus 1:

C F
This love, this love is the deep kind
Am G
You're my baby, you're my sunshine
C F Am
I'll hold your hand, be your biggest fan
G
and I'll love you all of the time

Verse 2:

C G F C G F
Our eyes are not quite the same shade
C G F C G F
and your hair blows in the wind a different way
C G F C G F
but I am your mother and I love you just the same
C G F C G F
so I'll take your hand honey, and you can take my name.

Chorus 1: (1x)

Bridge:

Am E F C G
My heart has been redeemed, adopted and
now I know my Father
Am E F G
this grace that I've received, I want to show
you, I want to show you

Chorus 2:

C F
This love this love is the deep kind
Am G
It hangs on through the storm and the
sunshine.
C F/D C/E
I'll hold your hand, be your biggest fan
G
and I'll love you all of the time

Chorus 1: (2x)

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Music

