

One Prayer Week 3

- What words would you use to describe the ideal father? Would you use those same words to describe your experiences with your father? Why or why not?

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Isaiah 64:8 (NIV)

"Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be honored. "

Matthew 6:9 (NLT)

- How do you think your experiences with your father impact your relationship with God as your father?

Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need...

"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

Luke 15:11-14, 17-24 (NIV)

- Jesus paints a beautiful picture of God's patience and forgiveness in the story of the prodigal son. Do you think of God as patient and forgiving?

(God) is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9 (NIV)

But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV)

- Do you think there are limits to His patience and forgiveness? Why or why not?

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)

"I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.

Isaiah 43:25 (NIV)

- Do you find it difficult to forgive others? Why do you think that is? Are you generally patient with other people? Why or why not?
- Do you think your relationship with God affects your forgiveness and patience with others? If so, how?

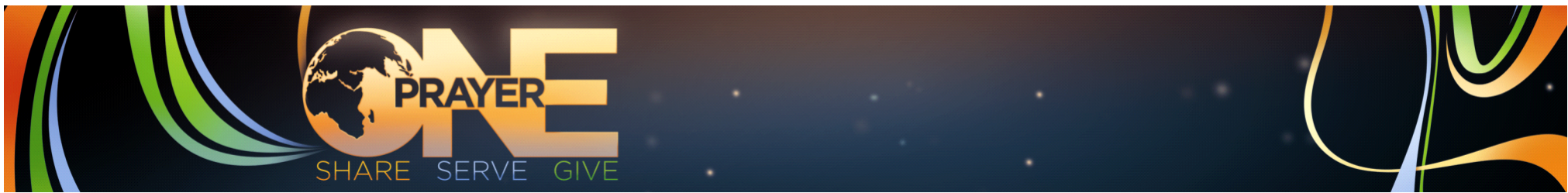
"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

Luke 15:20b (NIV)

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

1 John 3:1 (NIV)

Final thought: Where, in your life, do you need or want to be fathered? What kind of advice, guidance, love, encouragement or support do you need from God, your father, right now? Share that with God. Tell Him what you need. Ask Him to father you in those areas. Share your needs with your group as well. Let them help you hear and see God being a father to you in those places in your life right now.



One Prayer Week 3

For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below that you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

Open

- How do you normally react when you feel you have been treated unfairly?

Explore

Read Luke 15:11-32

- What did the younger son ask his father to do? (15:11-32)
- How did the younger son live once he was out on his own? (15:13-20)
- Why did the younger son have to hire himself out for work? (15:14-15)
- What made the younger son decide to return home? (15:17-19)
- How did the father respond to the younger son's return home? (15:20)
- Why did the father call for a celebration? (15:22-24)
- What was wrong with the older brother's reaction to his brother's return? (15:25-32)
- How did the older son respond to his brother's return and the celebration afterward? (15:28)
- What complaints did the older brother bring to his father? (15:29-30)
- Why did the father want the older brother to be happy? (15:31-32)

Reflect

- Have you been like the prodigal son in this story? The older brother?
- From whom do we tend to withhold mercy?
- What causes us to harbor resentment when mercy is shown to someone else?
- What does this parable mean to you personally?

Apply

- To what "undeserving" person can you extend God's love and forgiveness this week? How will you go about doing it?

Here are some suggestions you may want to use for your time with God this week:

Day 1: Read Isaiah 64:8 and Matthew 6:9. Spend time talking with God as your Father. Thank Him for His desire to be the ultimate father.

Day 2: Read Luke 15:11-32. Thank God in prayer for His patience and forgiveness in your life.

Day 3: Read 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 1:16. Ask God to help you extend more forgiveness, grace and patience in your life.

Day 4: Read Ephesians 1:7-8 and Isaiah 43:25. Ask God to help you grow in your forgiveness towards others.

Day 5: Read Luke 15:20 and 1 John 3:1. Ask God to show you in some intimate way His love and approval as His child today.