

The Father's Heart // Week One // God's Loving Kindness

Scripture: Psalm 145:8 NLT, Isaiah 63:7 NLT, Ruth 1:16-18 NLT, Ruth 2:5-12 NLT, James 5:15a NLT, Matthew 5:14-16 NLT, Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

Takeaway: Unconditional love and good news.

INTRO

[Author's note: Talk about your dad. If your dad was awesome, that's great! He still wasn't perfect, and that's the point. No earthly Dad can measure up to God the Father.]

When you think about a dad or a father, what comes to mind? Someone loving? Someone who is really strict? Someone you're excited to see and spend time with? Maybe it's someone you're scared of. Or, maybe you don't even have a definition of what a father should be, because your father hasn't been present.

For me, when I think of my earthly dad or definition of a father, I tend to think of someone who loves me, but he is only pleased with me when I measure up to his high standards. If I can't make the cut, then I need to try harder and do better. There were a lot of tears growing up. I was also really scared when I messed up anything, whether it was in my control or not, because we were always punished for not getting it right until we got it the way my dad wanted it.

TENSION

We all have different earthly fathers, whether they were present or not. Some of our dads have been better than others. Here's the thing, though: even if you had a really great dad, he is still human and makes mistakes. He can still let you down.

I don't know about you, but that's sometimes hard for me to fully grasp — the idea of God's being a good Father. I can't look at my definition of what a father is or compare God to my dad. Instead, I must look at what the Bible says about who God is.

TRUTH

So, what does the Bible say about God?

“The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.” Psalm 145:8 NLT

The psalmist says He is full of mercy and compassion, and He is slow to anger. He also writes that He is filled with a love that doesn't fail. That's a beautiful picture. The center of God's nature is His goodness. The people that wrote a lot of the Old Testament use a Hebrew word to describe it. That word is *chesed*, and it is the giving oneself fully with love and compassion to someone else. Our English translation would be loving kindness, but even that kind of simplifies it.

Isaiah wrote about God's nature when he wrote this:

“I will tell of the Lord's unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done. I will rejoice in his great goodness to Israel, which he has granted according to his mercy and love.” Isaiah 63:7 NLT

There's a woman in the Bible named Ruth. I'm going to give you a little backstory, and then we'll pick up her story. She and another girl were married to two brothers for a period of time, and then both brothers died. It doesn't say how; it just says they died. Ruth's mother-in-law had already lost her husband, so she was now a widow with no children. She told the two girls to go back to their homeland of Moab to find new husbands, and she would head back to her homeland of Judah. One of the girls agreed and returned to Moab, but Ruth didn't do that. Let's look at what she said to her mother-in-law, Naomi.

“But Ruth replied, “Don't ask me to leave you and turn back. Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord punish me severely if I allow anything but death to separate us!” When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she said nothing more.” Ruth 1:16-18 NLT

She was determined that she was not going to leave Naomi alone. She was going to go on this journey with her to Judah. When they got there, they headed to a field that belonged to a relative of Naomi, and Ruth followed behind the people that were harvesting that field. She was picking up grain they dropped.

Small Group Questions

1. What is a daily miracle you are thankful for? (breathing, walking, etc)
2. Define revival in your own words.
3. James 4:7-8a says we can draw near to God and He will draw near to us. What are some practical ways we can start drawing near to God this week?
4. What does it mean to live a daily life of revival?
5. What are some practical ways to model this daily life of revival to the world around us?

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