

A HEAVENLY FATHER CHANGES EVERYTHING

HE CALLS ME
Daughter

HEALING THE FATHER WOUND

A Six-Week Discovery
For Women's Small Group or Personal Study

By Bill & Tracey Robison

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Theological review provided by Dr. Kenny Silva, PhD

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Introduction

“The father is the key figure to impart identity. A young girl who doesn’t have that love from a father will look to fill the ‘father hole in her heart’ with an endless list of unhealthy substitutes.”

— *Dr. Meg Meeker*

Every little girl longs to know who she is and to feel that she matters. A father’s love is meant to answer those questions—to affirm her worth, protect her heart, and help her see herself through the eyes of God. But when that love is absent, inconsistent, or painful, something deep inside her begins to ache.

A **father wound** is that ache—a space left by an earthly father’s imperfection that shapes how we see ourselves and, often, how we see God. It’s the lingering pain that comes from neglect, harshness, rejection, abuse, or absence. Sometimes it’s the wound of *what was done to us*, and other times it’s the emptiness of *what was never done at all*.

This **six-week women’s study** is designed to help you name those wounds, understand how they’ve shaped your life, and invite your Heavenly Father into the places that still need His healing touch. Each week will walk you through both reflection and restoration—rooted in Scripture, compassion, and truth.

How the Study Works

Each chapter follows a simple rhythm that mirrors the process of healing:

- **The Problem** – an honest look at how earthly father wounds affect our lives and relationships
- **The Lie** – the false belief the enemy wants us to carry because of that wound
- **The Truth** – God’s redemptive perspective, grounded in His Word
- **Questions for Insight** – opportunities to reflect personally and discuss in community

- **Healing Steps** – practical ways to apply what you’ve learned
- **Application for the Week** – a simple step to help you walk out that truth

Throughout this journey, you’ll also meet several women whose stories will help bring the lessons to life. These vignettes aren’t meant to replace your own story but to serve as mirrors—offering glimpses of how a father’s limitations or failures can impact a daughter’s heart. As you read, you may recognize pieces of your own journey, and that’s okay. Let those moments be invitations for God to speak and bring comfort.

Because this study may stir deep and sometimes painful memories, we encourage you not to walk through it alone. Partner with a trusted friend, mentor, or small group of women. Begin each week by sharing what God showed you through the previous week’s application and pray for one another as you move forward. Healing happens best in safe community.

What’s Ahead

Each week builds upon the last, gently uncovering different aspects of the father-daughter relationship:

- **Week 1** – Understanding *projection* and how our earthly fathers shape our view of God
- **Week 2** – Exploring *protection, authority, and provision*
- **Week 3** – Examining *presence and abandonment*
- **Week 4** – Learning about *discipline, correction, and consistency*
- **Week 5** – Reflecting on *leadership* and its influence on trust and identity
- **Week 6** – Embracing *forgiveness* and freedom in Christ

Each topic will guide you one step closer to the truth that healing isn’t about forgetting the past—it’s about finding God’s presence in it.

A Prayer for the Journey

Our Dear Heavenly Father,

You are the Creator of all things and the Giver of life.

We acknowledge that only You can reach the deepest places of our souls and heal the wounds we carry from our earthly fathers.

Forgive us, Lord, for the ways we've projected our hurt and disappointment onto You.

Draw near to every woman who walks through these pages.

Bring comfort where there is pain, clarity where there is confusion, and peace where there has been striving.

Remind her that she is seen, known, and deeply loved.

We thank You that You are always pursuing our hearts for perfect relationship with You—here on earth and forever in Heaven.

Wrap each woman in Your compassion as she discovers her true identity: beloved, chosen, and cherished daughter of the King.

In the beautiful name of Jesus,

Amen.

WEEK 1

Projection

“A girl’s father is the first man in her life and probably the most influential.”

— *Dr. David Jeremiah*

A father is a daughter’s first mirror for understanding love, safety, and worth. He is meant to teach her who she is and how valuable she is to the world. But what happens when that mirror is cracked—when the man who was meant to love her most becomes distant, demanding, angry, or unsafe?

When the most important man in your life is abusive, neglectful, absent, or impossible to please, something inside you begins to break. You may start to believe things like:

I’m a burden. I’m unimportant. I’m unlovable. I’m insignificant. I’m unsafe.

And once those beliefs take root, they don’t stay confined to childhood. They color how you see the world—and even how you see God.

If your father was harsh, you may see God as harsh.

If he was absent, you may see God as distant.

If he was impossible to please, you may see God as impossible to satisfy.

If he abandoned you, you may fear that God will too.

This is what we mean by **projection**: we project onto our Heavenly Father the characteristics of our earthly one. But to understand how that distortion began, we must go back—to the very beginning.

The Problem of Sin

It all started with a Father.

Before there was time, before there was breath, God existed—complete, holy, and whole within Himself. Out of the overflow of His perfect love, He chose to write the story of creation.

He spoke the earth into being, separating water from sky, light from darkness, land from sea. He painted the heavens with stars and filled the oceans with living things. He formed trees and flowers, sun and moon, lions and sparrows. And with each act of creation, He stepped back and said, “*It is good.*”

But then came His masterpiece—humanity.

“So God created human beings in His own image;
in the image of God He created them;
male and female He created them. (*Genesis 1:27*)

Unlike everything else, men and women were made in His image—with the capacity to think, feel, create, and love. When God looked at His creation after forming humanity, He didn’t just call it *good*. He called it *very good*.

In that moment, the Father’s heart was revealed. He didn’t create out of boredom or need; He created out of love—because He desired to make a world where He could share Himself with His children.

The Father’s Design

From the beginning, God’s desire was to walk with His children in perfect fellowship. In the garden, He provided everything Adam and Eve would ever need—purpose, provision, and His very presence. His design for the family reflected that same pattern: a father who provides, protects, and loves; a mother who nurtures and supports; children who flourish under their care.

This was the perfect plan of a perfect Father.

But then came the father of lies to disrupt that perfect plan.

Satan whispered a lie that still echoes today: “*God is holding out on you. You can’t trust Him. You’ll be better off on your own.*”

Adam and Eve believed that lie, ate the forbidden fruit, and everything changed. Sin entered the world, and our view of the Father became distorted. The very first wound in human history was a **father wound**—the fracture between a loving Creator and His beloved creation.

How Sin Distorts Our View of the Father

Since that moment, humanity has struggled to see God clearly. Sin acts like a fog, distorting our perception of who He truly is. We no longer see Him as good, trustworthy, or near. Instead, we project our fear, shame, and broken experiences onto Him.

Even though sin damaged our understanding of God, it did not erase our *need* for Him. The longing remains—an ache for the love of the Father we were designed to know. And until that longing is filled, we will keep searching for substitutes to ease the emptiness inside.

We may try to fill that void with status, relationships, achievement, control, or pleasure. But nothing in this world can satisfy what only God was meant to fill.

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” (*Ps 16:11*)

The Design and the Distortion

Think of it this way: every automobile is designed to run on a specific fuel. You can fill a car with water if you want—but it won’t run. In the same way, your life was designed to run on the fuel of God’s love. Only His loving presence can make you function as you were meant to.

We were made to live *from* His love, not *for* it—to rest in the truth that His acceptance isn’t something we earn but something we already have. Living for anything else is like pouring water into the gas tank of our souls.

When we project our father’s failures onto God and turn away from His perfect love, we end up searching everywhere else for affirmation and identity. The cycle of disappointment will continue as one thing or person after another lets us down—that is, until grace interrupts it.

Reflection

Your Heavenly Father is not a reflection of your earthly father—He is the *perfection* of everything you ever longed for your earthly father to be.

Where your father was absent, God is ever-present.

Where he was angry, God is patient.

Where he was unpredictable, God is steadfast.

Where he failed, God redeems.

Your story began with a Father who called you *very good*. And, even if your sin has separated you from Him, that same Father is still calling you to come home.

God's Design for the Family

From the very beginning, God had a perfect plan for the family. Out of the sacred “one flesh” union between man and woman, new life would be created—a living picture of God’s love expressed through His image-bearers. Through the family, God would display His heart, His creativity, and His purpose for all creation.

In His divine wisdom, God made the roles of mother and father beautifully distinct. Each carries qualities that reflect different aspects of His own nature. One is not greater than the other; both are essential. The Father designed men and women with unique strengths and sensitivities—complementary, not competitive.

A father imparts things that only a father can: strength, identity, provision, protection, and leadership.

A mother imparts things that only a mother can: nurture, comfort, tenderness, and relational safety.

Together, they form a sacred partnership—two halves of a whole that reveal the fullness of God’s heart to a child.

In His design, the father’s role goes far beyond providing materially; it includes shaping a child’s sense of identity, purpose, and belonging. Through his words, actions, and presence, a father teaches his child what it means to be secure, capable, and loved. Likewise, the mother’s presence fosters emotional safety, empathy, and connection—helping her child understand the heart of relationship.

Both are vital, and both were part of the Father’s perfect plan. As the psalmist declares:

“For You created my inmost being;
You knit me together in my mother’s womb.
I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
Your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (*Psalms 139: 13–14*)

And to the prophet Jeremiah, God said:

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
before you were born I set you apart.” (*Jeremiah 1: 5*)

Even before your parents ever held you, your Heavenly Father had a plan—a design for your life, shaped in love and purpose.

The Problem of Sin - Revisited

But something happened. The beauty of that design was fractured.

When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve's disobedience, everything God created was affected. The perfection of the garden was replaced by the pain of separation. The harmony between Father and children was broken.

That fracture didn't just affect humanity's relationship with God; it impacted every relationship—including the family. The ability of earthly fathers and mothers to reflect the character of God became distorted.

Scripture reminds us of this universal reality:

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (*Romans 3: 23*)

Because of sin, we are no longer capable of living according to God's design. Even our best intentions fall short. Fathers fail to lead with love. Mothers struggle to nurture from peace. Children grow up confused about who they are and what love truly means.

On our own, our human efforts cannot restore what was lost in Eden. We cannot become the perfect parents, spouses, friends, or followers we were made to be. The fall didn't erase our desire for connection—but it did leave us incapable of achieving it apart from God's help.

But here is the good news: Our brokenness does not have the final word.

We can be reconnected to the Father through the healing work of Jesus Christ—even if the failure of our earthly fathers has driven us far from Him.

Sin makes orphans of us all, but the grace of God heals our wounds and brings us back into God's family through faith in the Son who lived and died for us. When we ran away from God, our heavenly Father sent our elder brother, Jesus, to find us and bring us back home.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (*John 1:12-13*)

The Father Wound

Every child is born with a deep, God-given need to be known, protected, guided, and loved by their father. When a father fulfills that role with tenderness, wisdom, and consistency, his children grow in confidence and security. But when he is unable to meet those needs—because of

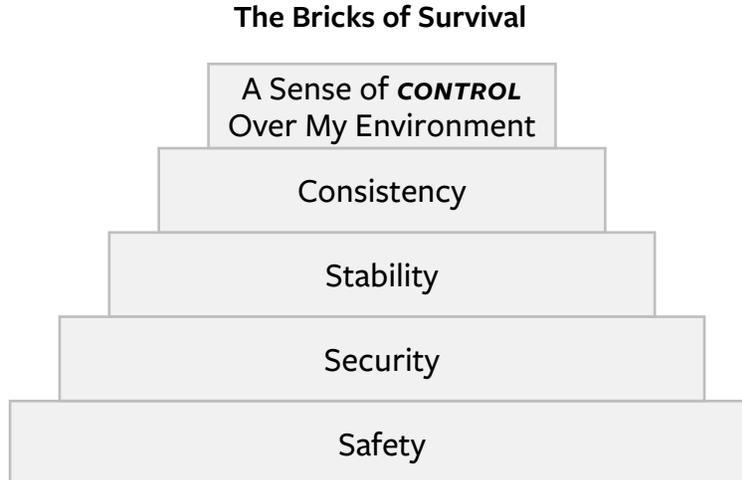
absence, neglect, abuse, addiction, or emotional distance—the result is something we often call “**the father wound.**”

A **father wound** is an unhealed trauma or unmet need that forms in a child’s heart because a father failed to give what God designed him to give. It may come from what was done that *should not have been done*—harsh words, anger, rejection—or from what *was not done* that should have been—words of affirmation, affection, or protection. Either way, the result is a lasting ache.

These wounds don’t disappear with age. They shape how we see ourselves, how we relate to others, and even how we experience God. A woman who grew up believing she was never good enough for her father may struggle to believe that her Heavenly Father truly delights in her. Another who was abandoned may find it hard to trust that God will stay.

The Building Blocks of Emotional Safety

To help us understand how these wounds form, we can look at what counselor **Marilyn Murray** calls *The Bricks of Survival* in her book *The Murray Method*. Murray uses the image of a house built on foundational bricks to represent the key developmental needs every child has.



Each brick represents an essential part of a person’s foundation:

- **Safety** – our sense of physical well-being and bodily security.
- **Security** – our emotional assurance that we are valued, cared for, and loved.
- **Stability** – the consistent provision of our material needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing.
- **Consistency** – the predictability of life; knowing that boundaries and expectations are reliable and fair.

- **A Sense of Control Over My Environment** – the ability to make choices, to feel agency, and to know that our voice matters.

Murray points out that each brick builds upon the one below it. **Safety** is the foundational layer—our most basic need for survival. God wired our brains to do whatever is necessary to preserve life. **Security**, the next layer, involves our emotional well-being—our sense that we are cherished and safe in relationships. **Stability** provides the physical support we need to live. **Consistency** helps us trust cause and effect in our environment. And finally, **Control** reminds us that we were created with free will, with the God-given ability to make choices and have influence in our world.

When all these bricks are strong and whole, a child can grow into a balanced, emotionally healthy adult who trusts others and feels safe in God’s love. But when one or more bricks are damaged, the structure becomes unstable—and the person may spend years trying to compensate for what was broken.

Cracks and Holes: Understanding How Wounds Form

Murray uses two simple images to describe how our “bricks” can be damaged: **cracks** and **holes**.

- **Cracks** form when something happens that *should not have happened*. These are experiences of harm—like being yelled at, hit, rejected, or abused. A father’s harshness or ridicule can leave cracks in a daughter’s sense of safety and worth.
- **Holes**, on the other hand, form when something *should have happened but didn’t*. These are experiences of neglect or emotional absence. For instance, if a father never says, “I’m proud of you” or “You are loved,” that silence leaves a hole—a missing piece where love and affirmation were meant to be.

Both cracks and holes represent needs that were unmet in God’s original design for fatherhood. And over time, if they are not healed, they shape how a woman views herself and her relationships. She might strive endlessly to prove her value, or she might shrink back, believing she has none. She might become overly independent, or she might look for affirmation in all the wrong places.

Where God Steps In

Here’s the hope: even if your earthly father left cracks or holes in your foundation, your Heavenly Father stands ready to fill and repair them. He is the God who rebuilds what is broken and restores what was lost.

“The Lord will guide you always;
He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.” (*Isaiah 58: 11*)

God does not shame you for your broken places—He meets you there. He wants to heal the parts of your heart that have been cracked or left empty, so that you can stand on a foundation of safety, security, stability, consistency, and confidence in His love.

The Lie of Projection

Sin affects us all. Every one of us has been touched by brokenness—whether through our own choices or through the pain of others’ choices that left a mark on us. Our stories are different, but the result is the same: *we all fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

Some of us grew up with fathers who were kind, attentive, and loving. Others grew up with fathers who were harsh, distant, unpredictable, or simply absent. And for some, the word *father* itself feels heavy - wrapped in grief, fear, or disappointment.

Whatever your experience, those early relationships shape more than your emotions; they shape your spirit. The holes and cracks left in your *bricks of survival* don’t just wound your body or your heart—they also affect your soul.

That’s where **projection** comes in.

Projection is the tendency to take what we learned about fatherhood from our earthly dads and unconsciously place it onto God. As children, our understanding of the world is limited. The only father we can see or touch is the one in our home. So, when we try to imagine what God is like, our minds reach for what we know.

If your dad was warm and steady, it may feel natural to believe God is trustworthy.

If your dad was silent or unpredictable, you may fear that God will be too.

If your dad abandoned you, you might picture God as distant or disinterested.

A little girl who cried out for her dad but never received comfort may grow up believing, “*God doesn’t hear me either.*”

A woman whose father was easily angered may quietly assume, “*God must be disappointed in me too.*”

This is the lie of projection—the belief that God must be just like our earthly fathers. But He isn’t.

The Truth

God is the *perfect* Father. He is not a reflection of your earthly dad; He is the *perfection* of everything your earthly dad was meant to be.

From the beginning, before sin entered the story, mankind lived in perfect relationship with a perfect Father. His design for your soul was simple and stunning: every need you would ever have—love, belonging, security, purpose—would be met in Him.

He is your **Protector**, shielding you from harm and guiding you toward safety.

He is your **Provider**, caring for every need before you even ask.

He is always **Present**, never distracted, never absent, never too busy.

He is your **Teacher**, shaping your character through loving discipline and truth.

He is your **Leader**, guiding your steps with wisdom and compassion.

And He is your **Forgiver**, whose mercy runs deeper than your shame.

Through Him, you are given a new identity—not as one who is forgotten or unworthy, but as a beloved and cherished daughter of the King.

You are not defined by your earthly father's failures. You are defined by your Heavenly Father's faithfulness.

“See what great 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)

The good news is this: while your earthly father may have shaped your first image of love, your Heavenly Father offers to rewrite it. Every lie formed in childhood can be replaced by truth. Every wound can be met with healing.

You were made for a relationship with a Father who will never leave you, never harm you, and never stop loving you.

Questions for Insight

As you take time to reflect this week, remember that God delights in revealing Himself to you. These questions aren't meant to bring guilt—they're an invitation to notice how your story has shaped the way you see your Father in heaven.

1. When you think about God, what are the first words or characteristics that come to mind?

Write down the words that rise up first—before you try to edit or filter them. Is He distant? Kind? Powerful? Gentle? What emotions surface when you picture Him?

2. When you think about your earthly father, what are the first words or characteristics that come to mind?

Think about your earliest memories—his tone of voice, his presence or absence, his affection, or his anger. What words would describe him best?

3. Looking at your two lists, how might your experience with your earthly father have shaped your view of God?

Ask the Lord to help you see any patterns of projection. Are there ways you've imagined Him through the lens of your father's strengths—or his brokenness?

Application for the Week

“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.” (*Psalms 103: 13*)

Throughout this week, pay attention to the small ways God shows His compassion toward you. It may come through a word of encouragement, a moment of peace, an unexpected provision, or simply the quiet awareness that He sees you.

Each time you recognize His care, pause to thank Him and write it down. At the end of the week, look back at your list and notice—your Heavenly Father has been present all along.

WEEK 2

Protection and Provision

“The will of God is never something you need to fear. It is the safest place you can be.”

— Elisabeth Elliot

Last week, we learned about *The Bricks of Survival*—those essential foundations of safety, security, and stability that allow a child to grow into a healthy, whole adult. Of all those bricks, **safety** is the most basic. If a child’s sense of safety is threatened, everything else—learning, connection, confidence, joy—takes a back seat. When survival feels uncertain, nothing else can thrive.

From the beginning, God designed fathers to be the primary source of protection for their children. A father’s voice, presence, and strength are meant to create an environment where a child can rest, explore, and grow without fear. His watchful care helps a daughter believe, “*I am safe, I am seen, and I am secure.*”

But when a father fails to protect—or worse, when he becomes the source of danger—the impact runs deep. A daughter learns that the world is not safe, that her voice doesn’t matter, and that trust is dangerous. She may grow up believing she must protect herself, because no one else will.

And as we learned in Week 1, those early lessons often become spiritual ones. A woman whose father was abusive or unprotective may begin to view her Heavenly Father through the same lens. She may wonder: *If my dad didn’t protect me, why would God?* She may fear that even God could hurt her if she lets her guard down.

The Problem of Abuse and Neglect

In last week’s lesson, we talked about *cracks* and *holes* in our foundational “bricks.” Abuse is one of the deepest kinds of cracks a child can experience. In God’s perfect world—a world without sin—these things would never have occurred. But in a broken world, many children suffer wounds that were never meant to be part of their story.

Abuse can take many forms:

- **Physical abuse** – when a child’s body is harmed or threatened.
- **Emotional abuse** – when words, silence, or manipulation create fear and shame.
- **Verbal abuse** – when harsh words, criticism, or yelling crush the spirit.
- **Sexual abuse** – when innocence is violated and trust is shattered.
- **Spiritual abuse** – when God’s name or authority is used to control or shame.
- **Financial abuse** – when money or provision is withheld to dominate or punish.

It’s important to recognize another, less obvious form of harm as well: **overindulgence**.

When a father gives a child everything she wants without boundaries, it may seem like love—but in truth, it’s another kind of imbalance. Overindulgence can create a false sense of entitlement, pride, or dependency. It leaves a daughter unprepared to face life’s challenges and can distort her understanding of God’s boundaries and discipline.

Abuse and neglect—whether harsh or indulgent—both communicate a painful lie: *“You are not safe. You are on your own.”*

But here’s the truth: **you were never meant to protect yourself**. God designed your heart to rest under the covering of His love. Even when your earthly father failed to provide that shelter, your Heavenly Father never stopped watching over you.

“The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.” (*Psalm 9:9*)

He is not distant. He is not careless. He is the Father who runs toward His children, not away from them.

Real Women, Real Wounds

Stories like these remind us that wounds take many forms, and not all of them are visible. For some, the harm came through abuse. For others, it came through neglect or absence. Whatever the source, the result is often the same—a heart that longs to feel safe, seen, and protected.

Jessica’s Story

Jessica grew up in what appeared to be the perfect Christian home. Her father was an elder in their large church, and from the outside, her family looked faithful and devoted. They were at church whenever the doors were open, admired by many as the picture of godliness.

But when the lights went out at night, the truth of Jessica’s home was much darker. Her father would quietly enter her room and molest her. Too terrified to move, Jessica would lie still, pretending to be asleep, praying for it to end—and wishing that somehow, it would be the last time.

Over the years, Jessica learned two powerful, devastating lessons: that men could not be trusted and that even God’s people could hide terrible secrets. As an adult, she married a kind and loving man, yet she continues to feel deep discomfort with intimacy. She often finds herself trying to please everyone, striving for approval in hopes of feeling safe and accepted.

Jessica’s story is one example of how abuse can shape our lives long after the harm has stopped.

Take a moment to reflect:

Are there experiences—physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or spiritual—that have left lasting pain in your life?

Have there been moments where your trust was violated, or your safety was compromised by someone who was supposed to protect you?

Meredith's Story

Meredith's life looked picture-perfect from the outside. Her father was a successful businessman who worked long hours to provide for his family. She never lacked for anything—beautiful clothes, vacations, opportunities, and comfort.

But what Meredith wanted most wasn't more things. She wanted *him*.

She longed for a dad who saw her, knew her, and delighted in who she was. Instead, she learned to stay out of the way—to keep quiet so as not to add stress to his already busy life. When he was home, he was distracted, tethered to his work, his mind always somewhere else.

So, Meredith adapted. She became capable and self-sufficient. She learned never to ask for help, never to be a burden. As an adult, those same patterns persist. She over-functions, over-commits, and over-achieves, rarely resting and often feeling utterly exhausted. Beneath her success lies a deep, unmet need to be cared for and protected.

Meredith's story is one example of how neglect—though less visible than abuse—can shape our sense of identity and self-worth.

Pause and ask yourself:

Can you identify ways neglect, absence, or emotional distance may have shown up in your own story?

Are there places where your heart learned to take care of itself because no one else seemed to?

The Lie of Abuse

Abuse and neglect both distort how we see ourselves and God, but the lies they whisper sound slightly different.

For those who have endured abuse, the lie often begins with **false guilt** and **shame**.

We begin to believe:

- *This was my fault.*
- *Something must be wrong with me.*
- *I must deserve bad things.*

Over time, that lie becomes a lens through which we view our lives. A woman who carries this wound may tolerate mistreatment, feel powerless to stand up for herself, or live in constant sadness and self-blame. She may find herself over-compliant—working tirelessly to keep peace or avoid rejection—because deep down she fears she is unworthy of love.

Spiritually, this lie becomes even more painful. It can whisper, *“God and people are unsafe. I must protect myself from both.”*

The tragedy of that belief is isolation—from others and from the very Father who longs to heal her. When she feels unsafe even with God, she hides behind walls meant to protect—but those same walls also keep love out.

But the truth is, God is not like the one who harmed you.

He is safe. He is good. And He is near.

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”

(Psalm 34:18)

The Lie of Neglect

Neglect can wound as deeply as abuse, though it often hides quietly behind the appearance of normal life. For a child, neglect communicates not just *what didn't happen*, but *what she wasn't worth*. When a father fails to notice, nurture, or pursue his daughter, she may begin to believe that her needs, her voice, and her heart simply don't matter.

Over time, this forms a lie that whispers,

“I am unworthy. I am unlovable. I don't deserve good things.”

This lie becomes the lens through which she sees herself and others.

It tells her she's invisible. It convinces her that joy belongs to other people, not her. It pushes her to settle for less than what God desires for her life—relationships that are unfulfilling, jobs that drain her, spiritual lives that feel distant and dry.

She may stop reaching for more because she doesn't believe "more" is meant for her. And when blessings do come, she might quietly wait for them to be taken away, as if good things aren't meant to last.

Neglect teaches self-sufficiency on the outside but starvation on the inside. The heart that longed for attention learns to survive without it—but not to thrive.

Spiritually, this lie often becomes,

"I don't deserve to be included in relationship with God or His people."

That false belief leads to isolation—a life of watching others enjoy intimacy with God while standing at a distance, convinced she's disqualified.

But beloved daughter, that is not who you are.

The Truth

The truth is that your worth is not determined by what anyone on earth failed to give you. Your value was established before you ever took your first breath—purchased and sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Through faith in Him and His sacrifice, you can know that you are not forgotten. You are not invisible.

You are a Daughter of the King.

Your Father in heaven calls you chosen, loved, and pursued. He does not overlook you; He delights in you.

You are not defined by neglect—you are defined by *His attention*.

"See what great 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)

And this is the truth about your design: you were made for connection—both with God and with His people. The One who created you never intended for you to live in isolation.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.” (*John 15:5, NIV*)

You were never meant to wither alone. You were made to flourish in the steady, nourishing love of your Heavenly Father.

When you rest in His presence, He begins to fill the empty spaces your earthly father left behind. Where neglect once told you that you were unworthy, God now declares:

“You are Mine.”

Questions for Insight

This week, take time to notice how your Heavenly Father has shown up for you — sometimes quietly, sometimes boldly, but always with compassion. Let these questions guide your reflection and help you invite God into the process of healing.

1. In what ways did you see God’s compassion in your life this past week?

Look for both the big and small ways He’s cared for you — a kind word, a moment of peace, a timely provision, a gentle reminder of His presence.

2. What wounds do you have from your father?

If you experienced abuse or neglect, what did that look like in your childhood? Write honestly. This isn’t about judgment — it’s about naming what was true. Healing begins when truth is spoken.

3. Looking back, can you identify ways God was providing for you — even in difficult seasons?

Sometimes we don't see His hand until much later. Reflect on how He may have been caring for you then, and how He continues to provide for you now as an adult.

4. Read Romans 5:17.

What would change in your life if you truly received God's *abundant provision of grace* — not just as an idea, but as a daily reality?

Healing Steps

1. You've already begun the healing process.

By identifying your wounds in Question 2, you've taken one of the most courageous first steps toward wholeness. Awareness opens the door for God's restoration.

2. Bring your pain into the light.

Healing deepens when we speak our stories aloud in safe places. Pray for God to reveal a trusted *Titus 2 woman* — a wise, mature believer, counselor, or mentor — who can listen with grace and truth. Talking through your experiences with someone safe helps release the power those wounds hold in silence.

3. Plant God's Word deep in your heart.

The truth of Scripture has the power to replace the lies that pain has written in your soul. Read, write, and speak these verses often — until they take root in your thoughts and shape your identity:

“For in Christ Jesus you are all sons (daughters) of God, through faith.” (*Galatians 3:26, ESV*)

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son (daughter), and if a son (daughter), then an heir through God.” (*Galatians 4:7, ESV*)

“Know that the LORD, He is God! It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” (*Psalms 100:3, ESV*)

“Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.” (*John 1:12–13, NIV*)

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes.” (*Ephesians 1:4, NLT*)

“But the Lord is faithful, and He will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.” (*2 Thessalonians 3:3, NIV*)

Let these promises sink in until they become louder than the voices of your past. You are seen. You are safe. You are loved.

Application for This Week

Jesus, the Son of God—fully divine yet fully human—came to earth to live the perfect life we never could. He obeyed the Father completely, fulfilling every commandment in love and holiness. Then, in the greatest act of mercy the world has ever known, He chose to take the punishment for our sin upon Himself. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus satisfied the demands of God's law and opened the way for us to be reconciled to the Father forever.

When we accept Jesus as Lord and receive His gift of eternal life, everything changes. We are cleansed of all unrighteousness, adopted into the family of God, and given a new identity. No longer are we children of wrath—we are *daughters and sons of the King*.

Our identity in Christ is the foundation of our self-worth. The world may tell us that value comes from status, success, appearance, or possessions, but God tells a different story. **Value is**

determined by the price someone is willing to pay for something—and Jesus paid for you with His life.

You are priceless in His eyes.

He took on your sin, bore your shame, and endured your punishment so that you could be restored to relationship with Him forever. Your worth does not shift with your circumstances, mistakes, or emotions. In Christ, your identity is secure. You are deeply loved, eternally cherished, and forever belonging to the Creator of the universe.

Even when life feels painful or uncertain, your standing with Him never changes. You are His daughter—today, tomorrow, and for eternity.

As you walk with Jesus, you will begin to reflect more of His character. Your life will become a living testimony of His goodness, a light that points others toward His love. God has created you with a unique purpose in mind—one He planned long before you were even born.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (*Jeremiah 29:11*)

“My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be.” (*Psalms 139:15–16*)

This Week’s Practice

Over the next several days, **practice living as a daughter of the King.**

Look for small ways to reflect His love and light to others.

You might:

1. Offer encouragement to someone who feels unseen.
2. Use your gifts to serve a friend or neighbor.
3. Choose gratitude over comparison.
4. Speak truth to yourself when old lies try to return.

Each act of grace, each moment of surrender, is a declaration of who you truly are—a **beloved daughter of the King.**

WEEK 3

Presence

““A father’s presence is more important than a father’s provision”.”

— Paul Strozier

There is something sacred about human connection. We were *made* for it.

From the moment of our creation, God designed us for relationship—with Him and with one another. Our need for presence runs so deep that when it’s taken away, our minds and hearts begin to ache. Isolation isn’t just lonely—it’s harmful.

Even our world understands this. In prisons, one of the harshest punishments is solitary confinement. When a person is cut off from all human contact for long periods of time, the effects can be devastating—depression, anxiety, confusion, paranoia, and even hallucinations. Research shows that these symptoms can appear quickly and sometimes last long after the isolation ends.

If the *absence* of human connection can wound us so deeply, imagine the healing power of *presence*.

The Healing Power of Presence

The Jewish tradition of *sitting shiva* offers a beautiful picture of how healing simple presence can be. When a family member dies, loved ones gather for seven days in the home of the grieving family. They come not to entertain, instruct, or fix anything—but simply to *be there*.

The family sits in their grief, and friends enter quietly. No one expects the mourners to serve or speak. Visitors do not offer clichés or try to lift the mood. They simply sit in silence, sharing space, acknowledging pain, and honoring loss.

It is not their words that bring comfort; it’s their *presence*.

There's something profoundly healing about knowing someone is with you, even when they cannot change your circumstances. That is the essence of what every child longs for from a father—to know that he is *there*.

A father's presence speaks safety without saying a word. It tells a child, "*You are not alone.*" When that presence is absent, the silence can echo for decades.

The Problem of Absence and Abandonment

The presence of a father in a daughter's life is profoundly shaping. His steady involvement communicates safety, belonging, and value. When that presence is missing—physically or emotionally—the effects run deep and lasting.

The numbers themselves tell a heartbreaking story:

- According to 2016 U.S. Census data, **24.7 million children under 18** lived without a father in the home. That's **1 in 3 children** in America growing up fatherless.
- In the African American community, that number rises to **57.6%**—more than one in every two children.
- Households without fathers are **four times more likely** to live below the poverty line (2021 Census Bureau).
- **63% of teen suicides** occur among adolescents from fatherless homes.
- **71% of teenage pregnancies** happen in homes where a father is absent.
- **90% of runaways and homeless teens** come from fatherless homes.
- **85% of children with behavioral disorders** grow up without engaged fathers.
- **70% of incarcerated juveniles**, and **85% of youth in prison**, have no relationship with their fathers.
- **71% of high school dropouts** come from homes without a father present.

The data paints a sobering picture, but it simply confirms what God's design has revealed all along: fathers matter.

A father's presence—his voice, his protection, his attention—anchors something deep in a daughter's soul. When he is absent, that anchor loosens. Studies show that girls raised without

their fathers are more likely to experience depression in early adulthood, with effects that can persist for years.

Different Kinds of Absence

There are many reasons a father may be absent. Some are due to circumstance—divorce, incarceration, military service, or unplanned pregnancy. Others stem from personal choices—a father consumed by his career, preoccupied with success, or absorbed in hobbies that leave little room for relationship.

And sometimes, the absence isn't physical at all—it's *emotional*.

He's at the dinner table, but his mind is somewhere else.

He's in the room, but his heart is unavailable.

A daughter can grow up in a house filled with noise and still feel completely unseen. She learns to shrink herself, to be easy, to stay out of the way—anything to avoid disappointment or rejection. Over time, she might begin to believe she doesn't matter at all.

The Emotional Fallout

When a father is uninvolved or distant, the unspoken message a daughter often receives is:

“You are not worth showing up for.”

That message can echo in her mind for years. It can show up as people-pleasing, overachievement, or a constant hunger for validation. She may learn to perform for love rather than simply receive it.

Spiritually, she may project that same distance onto God—believing that He, too, must be uninterested, disengaged, or far away. Her heart quietly whispers:

“God must be absent too.”

But that isn't the truth of who He is.

LaTonya's Story

LaTonya is a 28-year-old single mother living in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She has two daughters—Jasmine (12) and Nia (9)—and works hard to provide for them.

LaTonya was raised by a single mother and never knew her father. Her mom worked two jobs to make ends meet, which meant LaTonya often spent long hours with her grandmother. Though she was deeply loved by both women, her mother's absence due to work and her grandmother's declining health left LaTonya to figure out much of life on her own.

She also had two much older siblings who were rarely home, busy with sports and academics—anything that helped them escape the tension of their household. Even as a child, LaTonya sensed that she needed to take care of herself.

In elementary school, she was friendly and did well. But in middle school, as boys began to notice her, something shifted. Their attention made her feel special—seen, chosen, and wanted. She began to equate male attention with love.

At fourteen, LaTonya had her first “serious” boyfriend. She longed to hold onto his affection, fearing that if she didn’t do what he wanted, he’d lose interest and leave. Soon after her fifteenth birthday, she gave in to his pressure and slept with him—believing that’s what people did when they were in love.

When she learned she was pregnant, LaTonya was terrified, then hopeful. For the first time, she imagined building a family—the kind she had always dreamed of. Her boyfriend promised to stay and was even there for the birth of their baby girl, Jasmine. But only days later, the weight of responsibility overwhelmed him. “I just can’t handle this,” he said, before walking out of her life for good.

LaTonya was devastated. Though surrounded by her mother and grandmother’s support, she still felt completely alone. In her mind, her boyfriend’s abandonment confirmed the painful belief she’d carried for years: *men always leave*.

Over time, LaTonya repeated the same pattern—seeking love through sexual relationships, hoping each new connection would fill the emptiness left by her father’s absence. By the summer before her senior year, she was pregnant again. Determined to provide for her two daughters, she dropped out of high school, earned her GED, and began working full-time.

Nia’s father was kind and affectionate toward both girls, but he too proved unreliable and inconsistent. He often made promises to provide but rarely followed through.

Now, as a young woman, LaTonya wrestles with disappointment, confusion, and a quiet ache for the family she never had. Despite her resilience and determination, she still feels the sting of being unwanted and unseen. More than anything, she longs to give her daughters the stability she always craved—and to protect them from the same wounds that shaped her own heart.

LaTonya’s story is just one example of how father absence and abandonment can ripple into adulthood.

If your father was absent—physically or emotionally—take a moment to reflect:

- In what ways did that absence affect you as a child?
-
-

The Lie of Perfection

Another deeply rooted lie born from abandonment is:

“I have to be perfect.”

When love feels conditional—something that must be earned—she learns to perform for affection. She becomes the responsible one, the achiever, the fixer. She stays busy, constantly serving, constantly saying “yes” to everyone and everything, even when she’s exhausted.

On the outside, she may look put together. But inside, she is weary from striving. Her service is not driven by joy or calling, but by fear:

“If I don’t do enough, I won’t be loved.”

This same lie often seeps into her relationship with God. She may believe:

“God will love me once I’m perfect.”

“He’ll accept me when I finally have it all together.”

But the truth is, God’s love doesn’t depend on our perfection—it flows from His. His affection is not earned; it is freely *given*.

The Lie of Earned Love

A third lie many women carry is:

“I have to earn love.”

For some, this lie takes shape through sexual promiscuity or unhealthy relationship patterns. She may compromise her boundaries, hoping to keep someone’s affection. She may give too much of herself—emotionally, physically, or spiritually—believing that love must be maintained through performance.

Yet even after giving everything, she still feels empty. Unseen. Alone.

Spiritually, this becomes:

“God will love me if I do enough to earn it.”

But the truth of the Gospel is exactly the opposite. We do not earn His love—we *receive* it. God’s love is not a wage to be worked for; it is a gift freely given through Jesus Christ.

The Truth

The truth is this: **God has never left you.**

He has never abandoned you—not for a single moment.

Even when you felt unseen or forgotten, He was there. Even when your earthly father was absent or unavailable, your Heavenly Father remained fully present. There has never been a moment in your lifetime when God was not deeply concerned for every detail of your life. He has always desired you—to know you, love you, and have you love Him in return.

Through faith in Christ, God comes to live within you by way of His Holy Spirit. He doesn't just walk beside you—He dwells *in* you. His presence fills the very places that once felt empty.

It's hard to get any closer than that.

“The Lord Himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you.” (*Deuteronomy 31:8*)

“Do you not know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?” (*1 Corinthians 3:16*)

“Remain in Me, as I also remain in you.” (*John 15:4*)

The Truth About Perfection

Apart from Christ, none of us are perfect.

From the very beginning, sin separated humanity from our perfect, holy Father. That separation created a gap we could never bridge on our own. God knew this, and in His great mercy, He sent His Son to do for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Jesus came to earth and lived the perfect life we were meant to live. He fulfilled every requirement of God's righteousness, then willingly laid down His life to pay the penalty for our sin. Through His death and resurrection, He offered forgiveness and restored what sin had broken—our relationship with the Father.

If we could live up to God's perfect standard on our own, Jesus' sacrifice would never have been necessary.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (*Romans 3:23*)

“Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.” (*Ecclesiastes 7:20*)

“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.” (*Isaiah 64:6*)

The Truth About Love

We cannot earn God’s love.

We cannot behave our way into His favor or perform our way into His presence. God’s standard is absolute perfection. Even one sin would disqualify us from His holiness, let alone the deep sin that entangles all our hearts. Nevertheless, out of His great mercy, God has made a way.

What we could never earn, He freely gave.

What we could never achieve, He accomplished on our behalf.

Our right standing before God comes only by His *grace*—His unmerited favor—received through faith in Jesus Christ. Grace means we are given what we don’t deserve: love instead of wrath, forgiveness instead of judgment, belonging instead of separation.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.” (*Ephesians 2:8*)

“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all people.” (*Titus 2:11*)

Questions for Insight

1. What gifts and talents did you use in being a “light” of God’s love to others this past week?

2. How involved was your father in your life growing up?

3. If your father was absent, was it due to divorce, unplanned pregnancy, incarceration, personal decisions, or something else?

Describe how you sought approval from others—perhaps through people-pleasing, overachieving, or seeking attention.

If your father was present, did you feel he was proud of you? How has that experience shaped your sense of worth and self-esteem?

4. Read Joshua 1:9.

What might change in your life if you truly believed the Lord your God is with you wherever you go?

Healing Steps

1. Write a Letter to Your Father

Acknowledging and giving voice to the ways your father’s distance or absence affected you is an important early step toward healing.

This week, write a letter to your father identifying how his physical or emotional distance impacted you. Include what you wish you had received from him.

Note: This letter is for **you**. It does not need to be sent or shared. The purpose is to bring your story into the light and name the truth. If you think it would be helpful, you may share your letter with a trusted friend or your group.

2. Step Toward God's Presence

God uniquely wired each of us to experience His presence in different ways. Take time this week to pursue Him intentionally in whatever way best suits you:

- through worship music as you drive or walk.
- by reading His Word in a quiet spot or journaling outside.
- in stillness—simply sitting with Him and talking as you would with a friend.

Whatever it looks like, take one step closer toward Him. He is already near.

3. Encourage Another Woman

Think of one woman in your life you can reach out to and acknowledge this week. It could be as simple as a text:

“I’m praying for you today.”

Or you might simply tell her, “I see you, and I appreciate who you are.”

A small word of encouragement can remind someone that she is not alone.

Application for the Week

Return to the truth of **Joshua 1:9** — *“The Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

Practice becoming aware of God’s constant, never-ending presence in the moments of your daily life:

- As you drive, imagine Jesus sitting in the seat beside you.
- At work or at home, pause and thank Him for being with you.
- If you find yourself in a difficult or lonely place—even a hospital room, a recovery center, or a jail cell—picture Him right there with you, rejoicing over you.

“The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in His love He will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” (*Zephaniah 3:17*)

WEEK 4

Discipline, Correction, and Consistency

“Too often, we forget that discipline really means to teach, not to punish. A disciple is a student, not a recipient of behavioral consequences.”

— Daniel J. Siegel, M.D.

When we hear the word *discipline*, many of us immediately think of punishment, correction, or stern consequences. But true discipline, as Dr. Siegel reminds us, is really about *teaching*. It’s about guiding, shaping, and lovingly instructing our children toward wisdom and maturity. The heart of discipline isn’t control; it’s growth. It’s a father or mother patiently helping a child learn how to live in a way that leads to peace and flourishing.

From the very beginning, one of the most essential callings of parenthood has been to *teach*. Parents pass on the skills their children need to thrive—not only to survive physically, but to flourish emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. And in the heart of a young girl, a father’s teaching plays an especially unique role.

A Father’s Role in Teaching

Fathers are designed to help their daughters develop the skills of life: things like personal accountability, problem-solving, and wise decision-making. These lessons aren’t just about “how to behave,” but about *who she is becoming*. A dad helps his daughter understand what integrity looks like, what it means to take responsibility, and how to make decisions that reflect godly character.

Through his words and example, a father helps shape his daughter’s moral compass. He teaches humility, honesty, and respect—for herself and for others. And perhaps without even realizing it, he becomes the standard by which she will measure other men someday. How he treats her mother, how he speaks to others, how he handles anger or disappointment—all of it becomes part of her internal picture of what it means to be loved and valued by a man.

The Power of Example

A father's words matter deeply—but his *actions* speak louder. A daughter will remember how her dad *lived* long after she forgets what he said.

If Dad teaches that honesty is important, that lesson becomes powerful when she *sees* him live it out. For example, when he returns the extra \$20 the cashier accidentally gave him, his daughter silently absorbs that truth: integrity matters. But if, instead, he laughs and says, “Looks like my lucky day!” the message gets distorted. She learns that values are flexible—that words can say one thing, but actions another.

Children experience deep confusion and even distrust when a father's life doesn't align with his teaching. But when his actions reinforce his words, a foundation of safety, trust, and clarity is built in her heart.

Learning About the Heavenly Father

The major theme of this entire study has been that our view of our *earthly* father shapes how we see our *Heavenly* Father. That connection is never clearer than in the area of discipline and teaching.

A girl learns what it means to be loved, heard, and cared for by watching her earthly dad. When her father teaches her that she is precious to him, she begins to understand that she is also precious to God. When she sees her dad humbly pray to his Heavenly Father for the needs of the family, she learns that dependence on God is strength, not weakness.

This is how a daughter begins to discover that her hope is found not in her circumstances, her appearance, or even her earthly father's approval—but in the God who calls her daughter.

Correction: A Necessary Part of Teaching

Teaching is never complete without correction. Every parent knows that. We can explain, model, and guide—but at some point, every child chooses her own way.

If you've ever been around a child for more than three minutes, you've probably seen it: that little spark of rebellion that says, “*I'll do it my way.*” The truth is, because of sin, we're all born with that tendency. We all want to go our own way, to make our own rules, to do what seems right in our own eyes.

That's why correction is such an act of love. A father who lovingly disciplines his daughter teaches her that her actions have consequences—that choices matter. Through consistent correction, he helps her understand the importance of authority, obedience, and accountability. He teaches her that boundaries aren't punishment—they're protection.

Healthy correction also models something deeper: the justice and mercy of God. A father helps his daughter see that while there are right and wrong choices, there is also grace for repentance and restoration. She learns that even when she fails, her father's love doesn't disappear—and neither does her Heavenly Father's.

Encouragement: The Other Half of Discipline

Discipline doesn't stop with correction. Just as a father must address disobedience, he must also *affirm* obedience. A daughter needs to be seen, noticed, and celebrated when she does what is right.

When a dad sees his daughter cleaning her room and says, "you're doing a great job," that moment does more than encourage her behavior—it builds her confidence. It tells her, *I'm capable. I can do good things*. Over time, these small affirmations shape her self-worth and her ability to make wise choices.

The goal of discipline is not just to correct what's wrong—it's to reinforce what's right.

The Importance of Consistency

Consistency is one of the greatest gifts a father can give his daughter. When his words, actions, and responses are steady and predictable, she feels safe. Consistency builds peace because she knows what to expect.

When consistency is absent, confusion and fear take its place. Think of the child whose father is kind and patient when sober, but harsh and unpredictable when drinking. The inconsistency creates deep insecurity. She never knows which version of her father she'll encounter.

That kind of unpredictability shapes how she views authority—and even how she views God. It can make her feel that love is conditional or unstable. But a father who is consistent—both in his correction and in his praise—teaches his daughter that love is steady, trustworthy, and secure.

Healthy discipline is a beautiful balance: correcting wrong behavior while affirming right choices. When a father does one without the other, confusion takes root. But when he does both, consistently and with love, his daughter grows in confidence, wisdom, and peace.

The Problem of Unhealthy Boundaries

When a father fails to discipline with love and consistency—whether through neglect, harshness, or simple absence—the effects can reach far into his daughter's adult life. Discipline teaches far

more than right and wrong; it shapes how we relate to others, how we manage our emotions, and even how we understand God’s character.

When that discipline is missing or distorted, we grow up without the tools to set healthy boundaries. Healthy boundaries protect us, define where we end and others begin, and help us build safe, mutual relationships. As counselor **Marilyn Murray** describes, “A boundary keeps you from victimizing me and keeps me from victimizing you.”

But when we grow up without loving correction or consistent limits, we struggle to learn how to set and maintain healthy boundaries.

How a Lack of Discipline Shapes Us

Girls who weren’t given healthy or consistent discipline often struggle to regulate their emotions. Because they were never taught how to manage or express their feelings safely, they may overreact, shut down, or swing between both extremes. They might find it difficult to make decisions, control impulses, or know when to say “yes” and when to say “no.”

These challenges can lead to manipulation in relationships—trying to control situations or people to get the love and security they crave. Inside, there’s often confusion, uncertainty, or even a sense of entitlement: “*If no one ever told me no, why should I have to hear it now?*”

And here’s where it becomes deeply spiritual: when our earthly fathers mishandle discipline, we can begin to project those same qualities onto our Heavenly Father. We may feel that God is harsh and punitive, waiting to punish our mistakes. Or we may see Him as restrictive and fear that following Him means missing out on good things. As a result, many women keep their distance from God, afraid of His anger or skeptical of His love.

But God’s heart is not to punish; it’s to *restore*. His boundaries are never meant to imprison us; they’re meant to *protect* us. Understanding this truth begins with identifying how the absence or misuse of discipline has shaped our stories.

Maya’s Story: The Wounds of Rigid Boundaries

Maya grew up in a large family—her parents and six siblings. Her father’s approach to discipline was strict, harsh, and fear-based. When one child got in trouble, everyone paid the price. Maya was often spanked without even knowing what she had done wrong.

Over time, this created a deep sense of confusion and insecurity. She began to believe she could never get it right. Her self-esteem plummeted, and she struggled with impulse control—swinging between rebellion and withdrawal.

As an adult, these early wounds showed up in her relationships and work life. While she could make friends and find jobs, she struggled to *keep* them. Rules or boundaries triggered explosive reactions, leading to broken friendships and lost opportunities. Each time she was rejected, the pain only reinforced her belief: *I'm a failure. I'm unlovable.*

Reflection:

If you experienced harsh or rigid punishment from your father, can you see echoes of that today?

Do you find yourself bracing for rejection or expecting anger from others—or from God—when you make a mistake?

Elena's Story: The Chaos of Inconsistent Boundaries

Elena's father had *loose* boundaries. He wanted her to behave but was inconsistent in his discipline. When she misbehaved, he would make big threats ("You're grounded for a week!") but rarely follow through. Deep down, he felt guilty for being too strict or for making her miss out on fun, so he'd backtrack.

To avoid his disappointment or disapproval, Elena learned to read his moods and adjust her behavior to please him. Over time, she lost touch with her own feelings, stuffing them down so she wouldn't cause conflict.

As she grew older, all those buried emotions needed an outlet. Sometimes that came through self-harm, sometimes through oversharing—telling too much, too soon, in hopes of forming quick, deep connections. She would dive into intense friendships or relationships, becoming overly attached, and then push people away in anger or fear when they didn't meet her expectations.

Now, Elena battles loneliness, emptiness, and a lingering fear of abandonment. Her emotional world feels unpredictable—just like her father once was.

Reflection:

If your father’s boundaries were inconsistent, how might that be shaping your view of trust and intimacy today?

Are there patterns of people-pleasing, overattachment, or fear of abandonment that trace back to those early experiences?

Rosalia’s Story: The Confusion of No Boundaries

Rosalia’s story is one of *no* boundaries. Her parents longed for a child for years, so when she finally arrived, her father adored her and spoiled her in every possible way. He called her “my princess” and could rarely bring himself to tell her no.

When her mom said no, Rosalia would simply go to Dad—knowing he’d say yes. When she misbehaved, he’d laugh or shrug it off, calling it cute. If she felt sad, he’d buy her gifts or treats to cheer her up.

It seemed like love, but it taught her dangerous lessons: that love means always getting your way, that money or gifts can soothe pain, and that manipulation is a way to get your needs met. As an adult, Rosalia struggles with selfishness and entitlement. When life feels painful, she overspends to feel better. In relationships, she can be controlling or critical, driven by pride and insecurity all at once.

Reflection:

If you grew up without boundaries or consequences, how does that show up now?

Do you find yourself expecting others—or even God—to meet your every need?

What would it look like for you to trust God’s “no” as an expression of His love, not His rejection?

Bringing It Together

Each of these stories—Maya’s, Elena’s, and Rosalia’s—illustrates a different kind of broken boundary. Whether too rigid, too loose, or nonexistent, unhealthy discipline distorts how we relate to others and to God.

But here’s the hope: healing is possible. As we begin to understand where our patterns come from, we can invite our Heavenly Father to retrain our hearts. He offers what our earthly fathers couldn’t—perfect love balanced with perfect truth. He disciplines not to punish but to *restore*.

“My child, do not despise the Lord’s discipline,
and do not resent his rebuke,
because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
as a father the son he delights in.” (*Proverbs 3:11–12*)

Through His steady love, we learn to set healthy boundaries, manage our emotions, and walk confidently as beloved daughters—safe, seen, and secure in Him.

The Lie of Unhealthy Boundaries

Every daughter learns lessons from her home—some spoken, others silently absorbed. When a father’s discipline is harsh, inconsistent, or absent altogether, his daughter often grows up believing *lies* about herself, others, and even about God. These lies become the lenses through which she views the world, distorting her understanding of love, worth, and safety. But recognizing those lies is the first step toward freedom and healing.

When Boundaries Are Too Rigid

Women raised by fathers who were overly strict, punitive, or controlling often internalize a deep fear: *“The world isn’t safe, and people can’t be trusted.”*

Their childhoods were filled with criticism or constant correction, so they learned that love must be *earned* and that failure is always waiting around the corner.

This belief system forms powerful lies such as:

- “The world is unsafe and unfair.”
- “Acceptance only comes when I prove myself.”
- “Everyone is judging me.”
- “I am a failure and can’t do anything right.”

When a woman carries these lies into adulthood, she often moves through life with chronic feelings of shame, inadequacy, and hopelessness. She avoids risks, fearing criticism or rejection. Growth feels dangerous. Vulnerability feels impossible.

To protect herself, she may keep others at a distance—rejecting them before they have a chance to reject her.

The Lie About God

For the woman who grew up under rigid, punishing boundaries, the lie about God often sounds like this:

“God is harsh and unaccepting. He’s just waiting for me to mess up so He can punish me.”

That belief keeps her hiding—from God, from prayer, from grace itself. She may carry an ongoing sense of guilt and shame, feeling that she can never measure up. Instead of running *to* God with her pain, she runs *from* Him, living a faith that feels cold and distant rather than warm and relational.

But this is not the heart of the Father. Scripture tells us that “*There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1). God doesn’t hover, waiting for our mistakes; He draws near, waiting to *heal* them.

When Boundaries Are Loose or Inconsistent

Another kind of wound comes from a father whose boundaries were unpredictable. Maybe he swung between strictness and leniency, anger and indulgence. His daughter could never tell what would set him off—or if his promises would hold.

This type of inconsistency quietly teaches another set of lies:

- “Other people’s needs are more important than mine.”
- “It’s my job to keep everyone happy.”
- “If I don’t meet others’ needs, they’ll leave me.”
- “I’m invisible—and people always leave.”

These lies often lead to exhaustion and resentment. Such a woman may constantly overextend herself, saying yes when her heart is crying no. She feels invisible and unappreciated, yet terrified of being alone. In relationships, she can become over-involved, emotionally drained, and confused about where others end and she begins.

The Lie About God

Women from these backgrounds often project their father’s inconsistency onto their Heavenly Father. Their faith may be driven by striving rather than rest. The lie often sounds like:

“I have to prove my value to God by fixing other people.”

“God cares for everyone else, just not me.”

This lie can make God feel distant—like He’s too busy for her pain, too focused on others to notice her needs. Over time, she may serve tirelessly but never feel loved deeply. Her relationship with God becomes performance-based, not grace-based. She does everything *for* God but struggles to simply *be* with Him.

When There Are No Boundaries at All

Some daughters grow up with fathers who never said no. Their dads wanted to make them happy, to be their friends instead of their guides. On the surface, that might seem loving—but over time, it teaches dangerous messages about entitlement and self-focus.

A woman from a boundaryless home often believes:

- “I deserve to get what I want.”
- “Others exist to meet my needs.”
- “I shouldn’t have to compromise.”

She may become demanding in relationships, frustrated when life doesn’t bend to her expectations. She may struggle with pride or an inflated sense of self-importance. Deep down, however, her heart often feels empty and unsatisfied, because getting what we want isn’t the same as receiving what we *need*.

The Lie About God

Women raised without boundaries often develop a different kind of spiritual lie:

“I don’t need God—or His commands.”

Instead of fearing rejection, she rejects God first. His loving boundaries feel restrictive, even oppressive. She sees His instructions as rules meant to limit her joy instead of expressions of His love meant to protect it. So, she chooses to live life her own way—only to find herself lonely, restless, and spiritually hungry.

The Truth That Sets Us Free

Each of these lies has one thing in common: they distort the true heart of the Father.

God is not harsh and unapproachable. He is not inconsistent or distant. And He is not a push-over who lets us destroy ourselves.

He is the perfect balance of love and truth—firm in His boundaries, generous in His grace, and unwavering in His commitment to our good. His boundaries are the *proof* of His love. They are not a punishment for our independence; they are the guides that show us how to make the best use of our freedom.

Where our earthly fathers failed, our Heavenly Father restores. Where lies took root, truth brings healing.

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

The journey toward healing begins when we start naming the lies we’ve believed and replacing them with God’s truth. As we do, we find that His boundaries aren’t walls that confine us; they’re fences that keep us safe in the wide-open field of His love.

The Truth

When we step back and look at God’s creation, we see a breathtaking truth: **our God is a God of order.** Nothing He does is random, careless, or chaotic. Every sunrise, every rhythm of the tide, every intricate detail of the human body—each reveals His intentional design. God created a world that flourishes when it stays within the beautiful boundaries He established.

These divine boundaries are not meant to restrict us; they are meant to protect and sustain us. They help us thrive in the life He designed us to live.

In *The Care and Counsel Bible*, Drs. **Henry Cloud** and **John Townsend** remind us:

“Whenever we encounter words in the Bible like *truth, righteousness, justice, honesty, integrity, holiness*, we should pay attention. They describe some aspect of boundaries for God’s people.”

God’s Word sets the framework for healthy living. His commands and correction draw clear lines between what brings life and what brings destruction. When we see His boundaries as expressions of love rather than limitations we begin to walk in freedom instead of resistance.

As we embrace His truth and apply His Word to our lives, something miraculous happens: we are **transformed**. God’s Spirit conforms us to the image of Christ, making us more like the One who embodies perfect love, wisdom, and self-control. Every act of discipline, every moment of conviction, every time God lovingly says “no” is His way of guiding us back to dependence on Him—the safest place our hearts can be.

God’s Loving Discipline

“My son (daughter), do not despise the Lord’s discipline,
and do not resent His rebuke,
because the Lord disciplines those He loves,
as a father the son (daughter) He delights in.” (*Proverbs 3:11–12*)

God’s discipline is not punishment—it’s *protection*. It’s His loving gesture to shape us into the sons and daughters He created us to be. When He corrects us, it’s because He delights in us. His heart isn’t to shame us but to strengthen us, teaching us how to live in step with His design.

Becoming Light in a Dark World

As we grow in Christlikeness, we begin to reflect His glory in a world that desperately needs it. Our obedience and transformation point others back to Him.

“You are the light of the world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket,

but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.” (*Matthew 5:14-15, ESV*)

When we walk in His truth, we become beacons of His grace—shining proof that His boundaries lead to freedom, not captivity. The more we surrender to His guidance, the brighter His light shines through us.

The Unchanging Faithfulness of God

Finally, we can rest in this promise: God’s character never changes. His boundaries don’t shift with culture or mood. His Word is steadfast and reliable—always true, always faithful.

“God is not human, that He should lie,

not a human being, that He should change His mind.

Does He speak and then not act?

Does He promise and not fulfill?” (*Numbers 23:19*)

The world may be uncertain, but God is not. His boundaries are anchored in His goodness. His discipline flows from His love. His truth will never fail you.

When we trust His design, even when it feels uncomfortable or limiting, we discover that His way is the way of peace, purpose, and lasting joy.

The motivation beneath your answers often reveals whether the boundaries you're living by are healthy or unhealthy.

2. Identify Where Boundaries Are Needed:

Think about the relationships or circumstances in your life that might benefit from clearer boundaries. If this concept feels new or unfamiliar, seek out a trusted friend or a solid biblical resource.

A helpful place to start is the bestselling book *Boundaries: When to Say Yes, When to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* by **Dr. Henry Cloud** and **Dr. John Townsend**.

If you already practice healthy boundaries, consider coming alongside someone who doesn't. You may be the gentle example or encouragement they need.

3. Release and Pray:

Find a quiet place and give yourself permission to reflect on the ways your father's boundaries—whether rigid, loose, or absent—may have affected you.

Bring those memories to God in prayer. Ask Him to help you release any lingering resentment, disappointment, or grief you carry from those experiences. Invite Him to fill those spaces with His peace and healing love.

Application for the Week

Read **Ephesians 4:25**:

“So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.”

This verse reminds us that when our boundaries have been violated, we are still called to respond with honesty, integrity, and grace. Healthy boundaries are built on truth spoken in love.

This week, choose one trusted friend or person within your close circle.

Share with them a clear expectation you have for your relationship—something that helps foster closeness, consistency, or mutual care. Then ask them to share one expectation they hold of you.

For example:

“I'd love for us to check in with each other at least once a week.”

Learning to communicate healthy expectations is one of the most loving and faith-filled ways we can honor God's truth in our relationships.

WEEK 5

Leadership

“He didn’t tell me how to live, he lived and let me watch him do it.”

— *Clarence Buddington Kelland*

Leadership is most powerfully taught by example. We can tell our children what is right, but when they *see* us living it out, that truth takes root. The way a father leads his home speaks volumes—not only about his values, but about the character of the God he represents to his family.

Adam’s Missed Leadership

It’s easy to point to Eve as the one who “messed up” first. Yet when we revisit the creation story in *Genesis*, there’s something deeper happening. In Week 1, we looked at how Adam and Eve lived in perfect peace and harmony with God until the moment the serpent began whispering lies—questioning God’s goodness, twisting His words, and planting doubt.

Eve listened. She was deceived. But Adam was there too, watching, listening, silent. Before Eve took that first bite, Adam failed in his role of leadership. He didn’t step in to protect her, to speak truth, or to defend God’s goodness. He allowed deception to continue unchallenged.

In that moment, leadership was abdicated. And the absence of godly leadership always carries consequences. This week, we’ll explore what happens when fathers lead well—and when they don’t.

God’s Design for Order

Our God is a God of order, not chaos. From the rhythm of the seasons to the balance between night and day, to the miracle of creation’s breath exchange—our exhaled carbon dioxide giving life to trees, their oxygen sustaining ours—everything reveals His precision and purpose.

“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God’s holy people.” (1 Corinthians 14:33)

In that same spirit of order, God designed the family. Husband and wife stand together at the top of that hierarchy—equal in value, distinct in role. Each was created with specific strengths and gifts that complement one another. And within that design, God gave the father the sacred responsibility of *leadership*.

Examples of Godly Leadership

Throughout Scripture, we see men called by God to lead their families and His people. They weren’t perfect, but they were willing. And that obedience changed everything.

Abraham was called to leave everything familiar—his home, his family, his land—and follow God into the unknown. Imagine the scene:

“Sarah, start packing. We’re moving.”

“Where are we going?”

“I’m not sure—but God will show us.”

That’s faith. Abraham’s obedience set the tone for his household and the generations to come.

Noah was called to build an ark in a region that barely knew rain—let alone flooding. While others mocked him, Noah stayed steady, leading his family in faith and endurance. His leadership preserved not just his family, but the future of humanity.

Moses was called to confront Pharaoh—the most powerful ruler on earth—and lead an enslaved people to freedom. Though he doubted his ability, God reminded him: *You are not alone*. Moses obeyed, leading with humility, courage, and dependence on God.

Each of these men led imperfectly but faithfully. Their stories remind us that godly leadership begins not with confidence in ourselves but with trust in God’s direction.

The Cost of Poor Leadership

The Bible also records the heartbreak that comes when men lead apart from God’s wisdom. From King Saul’s pride to David’s moral failure to Adam’s passivity, poor leadership always leaves wounds. When a father steps outside God’s design—leading with domination, neglect, or indifference—the family suffers.

When he leads with humility, courage, and love, the family flourishes.

Servant Leadership in the Home

Modern culture often resists the idea of male leadership, assuming it means power or control. But that's not God's design. Leadership in God's kingdom looks radically different—it looks like *Jesus*.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,
and to give His life as a ransom for many.” (*Mark 10:45*)

Jesus is the ultimate model of servant leadership. Though He held all authority, He chose humility. Though He was worthy of service, He chose sacrifice.

That's the kind of leadership God calls fathers to embody. A godly father doesn't demand obedience through fear; he invites respect through love. He doesn't rule his family; he shepherds it. His authority is expressed through empathy, protection, and consistent care.

When a father leads this way, he reflects the heart of Christ—the One who washed His disciples' feet, carried our burdens, and gave His life for us.

How Fathers Lead Their Daughters

So, what does this kind of leadership look like in a father's relationship with his daughter?

A father leads through **guidance**—helping her learn how to make wise decisions and discern truth from deception.

He leads through **involvement**—staying engaged in her life, her thoughts, her challenges, her dreams.

He leads through **example**—modeling integrity, humility, and reliance on God for wisdom.

He leads through **accountability**—owning his mistakes, asking forgiveness, and demonstrating responsibility.

He leads through **empathy**—showing compassion for her emotions and teaching her how to care for others.

He leads through **validation**—listening to her voice, affirming her worth, and helping her feel seen and heard.

When a father leads with this servant-hearted strength, his daughter learns to trust leadership. She learns that authority doesn't have to be harsh—it can be loving, kind, and dependable. That trust will carry into her future relationships and her faith.

“A good father is one of the most unsung, unpraised, unnoticed,
and yet one of the most valuable assets in our society.”

— Reverend Billy Graham

Dr. Graham’s words capture the quiet power of godly leadership. True fathers lead not for recognition but for love. They guide without demanding, protect without controlling, and serve without boasting. Their lives echo the leadership of Christ—steady, humble, and faithful.

The Problem of Ineffective Leadership

When a father fails to lead—or when he leads through control instead of compassion—the consequences ripple through every part of a daughter’s life. Leadership isn’t just about decisions; it’s about *direction*. A father’s example teaches his daughter how to trust, how to discern, and how to relate to authority. When that example is absent or unhealthy, confusion often fills the gap.

What happens when a dad micro-manages, dominates, or simply fails to step up?

The results can show up in a variety of ways: **unhealthy self-sufficiency, blind trust in men, difficulty trusting a husband, and struggles with authority**. Let’s look at each one more closely.

1. Unhealthy Self-Sufficiency

Self-sufficiency, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. In fact, Scripture praises diligence and hard work. But when independence becomes *overdependence on self*, it often hides a deeper wound—the belief that no one can be trusted to help, so I must do everything on my own.

Women raised without dependable leadership often grow up determined to fill that gap themselves. They take charge, stay strong, and rarely show need. But beneath that drive, there typically lies exhaustion, isolation, and quiet resentment.

Because asking for help feels risky, they shoulder every burden alone. They may even reject help when it’s offered—telling themselves it’s just easier to do it all rather than depend on someone who might fail them.

The result? A life of constant striving, hidden loneliness, and a lack of true community. And yet, living in community is exactly how God designed us. He wired us to need one another—because interdependence, not isolation, reflects His heart.

2. Looking for Leadership in the Wrong Places

On the opposite end of the spectrum, some women respond to poor fatherly leadership not by taking control—but by surrendering it too easily.

If a girl grows up without a strong, loving example of godly leadership, she may have no healthy standard to measure other men against. In her search for security, she may find herself drawn to confident or charismatic men—assuming strength automatically equals safety.

But charisma without character can be dangerous. Without discernment, she may confuse control for care or mistake dominance for leadership. And because she never saw what healthy leadership looked like, she may accept patterns of manipulation, codependency, or emotional neglect as “normal.”

God desires better for His daughters. He wants us to be led by men who mirror Christ’s heart—servant leaders marked by humility, gentleness, and self-sacrificing love.

3. Difficulty Trusting Her Husband

For some women, ineffective fatherly leadership leaves deep scars of mistrust. When a dad is absent, inconsistent, or emotionally unavailable, his daughter may grow up believing men cannot be relied upon.

That mistrust can carry into marriage and other close relationships. She might question her husband’s motives, doubt his decisions, or fear giving up control. Vulnerability feels unsafe—especially when past experiences taught her that leadership equals disappointment.

These wounds can touch every area of intimacy—emotional, spiritual, and physical. She may struggle to trust her husband with her heart, her finances, or even her dreams. And when fear drives her to take charge, conflict often follows.

This pattern can subtly place her in the “leadership role” of the home, not because she desires control, but because control feels safer than trust. Yet lasting healing begins when she learns that *God’s authority* is trustworthy—and that true partnership requires both courage and surrender.

4. Difficulty Responding to Authority

Finally, a father’s failure in leadership can deeply affect how a daughter relates to authority in general.

Some women grow resistant to authority—pushing back against teachers, bosses, pastors, or mentors. Authority feels like a threat to autonomy, a reminder of past pain. Others respond in the opposite way—constantly seeking approval, validation, or permission from those in charge, striving to earn affirmation they never received from their father.

Both reactions come from the same place: a wounded understanding of authority. But healthy authority, as modeled by God, is protective, not oppressive. It seeks to build up, not tear down. Learning this truth can transform how a woman relates to leadership in every sphere of her life.

A Path Toward Healing

Ineffective leadership can leave behind deep confusion—but it doesn’t have to define the rest of the story. Our Heavenly Father is the ultimate leader: strong yet gentle, firm yet patient. Where earthly fathers have failed, *He* restores.

Through His Spirit, He teaches us to trust again, to rest in His direction, and to lead others in love. He shows us that true leadership isn’t about control—it’s about character. And through His grace, even the most painful examples of broken leadership can become places of wisdom, healing, and renewed strength.

Alice’s Story

Alice grew up in what many would call a “traditional” home. From the outside, her family looked stable—two parents, two children, a familiar rhythm of daily life. But inside the home, something essential was missing: *leadership*.

Alice’s father struggled to take initiative in the family. He wasn’t cruel or neglectful in the obvious sense; rather, he was quiet, indecisive, and emotionally disengaged. He rarely participated in family discussions and often deferred to Alice’s mother whenever important decisions needed to be made.

At first, Alice didn’t notice this imbalance—it just seemed normal. But as she grew older, she began to feel the weight of her father’s silence. When she needed guidance, she instinctively turned to her mom instead of him. Deep down, she longed for her dad’s input—for him to speak wisdom, to show interest, to affirm her value. But his absence in those moments sent a different message: *You’re not important enough for me to engage*.

That unspoken message shaped the way Alice saw herself. She struggled with self-esteem and battled a quiet fear of rejection. Because her dad didn’t validate her worth, she began to chase it elsewhere—through performance, through achievement, through the approval of others. Perfectionism became her protection. If she could just do everything right, maybe she’d finally feel worthy.

This pattern followed her into adulthood. In her relationships, Alice swung between two extremes. In healthy relationships, she found herself guarded and distrustful—afraid to depend too much, afraid to be let down again. In unhealthy ones, she fell into codependency—pouring herself into “fixing” the other person, hoping her love could make them whole.

More than once, she was drawn to confident, outgoing, and charismatic men who seemed to exude the leadership she had missed from her father. But that attraction often led to heartache.

She sees others as unreliable and relationships as risky. Trust feels dangerous. Vulnerability feels impossible. And because healthy relationships depend on openness and mutual trust, she ends up isolated — the very thing her heart was trying to avoid.

The Lie About God

The earthly lie of “I can’t trust anyone” often turns into a spiritual lie:

“God is untrustworthy. He won’t meet my needs.”

Believing this, she begins to hold God at arm’s length. She avoids depending on Him, thinking it’s safer to take care of herself. But the tragedy is that she misses the joy of resting in His care — the comfort and peace that come only through surrender and trust.

Our Heavenly Father is not distant or disinterested. He delights in meeting our needs. The very dependence we fear is the place where His love heals us most deeply.

The Lie of “The Right One”

When a father fails to lead well, his daughter may begin to look for leadership and security elsewhere — often in romantic relationships. She grows up believing that if she can just find “the right one,” she’ll finally feel complete, safe, and loved.

The lie of “*the right one*” tells her:

“A man will complete me.”

This belief sends her searching for fulfillment in others rather than in God. She may find herself caught in a string of relationships, mistaking passion for love or control for care. She may settle for attention instead of respect, mistaking being wanted for being valued.

Over time, this pattern leaves her feeling used, ashamed, and unworthy. Yet she keeps chasing the next relationship, hoping this one will be different — this one will fill the emptiness.

The Lie About God

The deeper projection of this lie onto God is:

“God is not enough to sustain me.”

If she doesn’t believe God can meet her deepest emotional needs, she’ll look to people to do it. But human love, no matter how sincere, was never designed to replace divine love. When we try to find our worth in another person’s approval, we always end up disappointed.

The truth is that no man can complete what only Christ can redeem. God's love doesn't compete with our need for companionship; it fulfills it. His love is the foundation upon which all other love must rest.

The Lie of Men as Untrustworthy

When a father's leadership is absent, inconsistent, or self-focused, his daughter's ability to trust male authority becomes fragile.

The lie of men as untrustworthy tells her:

"All men are unsafe. They cannot be trusted with my heart."

Operating from this lens, she may reject or resist her husband's attempts to lead. Even small decisions can feel like threats to her independence. Fear replaces intimacy; suspicion replaces safety. She may become guarded, defensive, or controlling — not out of pride, but out of fear of being hurt again.

The Lie About God

This lie often extends heavenward:

"God is untrustworthy."

If the men in her life failed her, she may subconsciously expect the same from God. She might fear surrendering her life to Him because she doubts His motives. Deep down she wonders, *If I can't trust the men I can see, how can I trust the God I can't see?*

But God's leadership is unlike any other. He is not reckless, harsh, or self-serving. His authority is perfect love in action — always for our good and never for our harm. The healing begins when she believes that God is who He says He is, and that she is who God says she is.

The Lie of Unreliable Authority

When leadership in the home was unhealthy or absent, it often damages how a woman perceives all forms of authority.

She may see leaders — bosses, pastors, mentors, or even her husband — through a filter of distrust:

"All men are unwise. All authority is controlling."

This lens makes it difficult to respect or receive guidance, even from healthy leaders. She may feel the need to question every decision, to maintain control, or to prove her worth. Others' leadership feels threatening, and she may isolate herself to avoid being under anyone's authority.

The Lie About God

The spiritual version of this lie sounds like:

“God doesn't deserve authority in my life.”

If she believes God is harsh or domineering, she'll resist His pursuit of her heart. She'll hold back, afraid that submitting to Him means losing herself. But submission to God is not oppression—it's liberation. It's choosing to trust the One who loves her most.

When she begins to see that His authority is rooted in kindness, she can finally rest in His leadership instead of resisting it. True freedom doesn't come from escaping authority—it comes from surrendering to the right one.

Redeeming the Lies

Each of these lies—self-sufficiency, “the right one,” distrust of men, and distrust of authority—springs from the same wound: a father who didn't lead well. But each one can be healed by the same truth: **our Heavenly Father leads perfectly.**

He is steady where others were uncertain.

He is strong where others were weak.

He is safe where others were unsafe.

He is trustworthy where others were unreliable.

The process of healing begins when we name the lies and replace them with truth. As Jesus said,

“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (*John 8:32*)

The Truth

Our God is a God of order. His creation is purposeful, structured, and full of meaning. From the stars that move in perfect rhythm to the intricate design of a single human cell, everything He made reflects His character—stable, wise, and intentional.

Part of His design for this world includes leadership—people placed in positions to guide, nurture, and protect according to His will. When leadership reflects God's heart, it brings peace

and flourishing. When it fails, confusion and pain take root. But even then, God remains the ultimate and perfect Leader—our true source of direction and worth.

Finding Our Worth in Him

God values relationships deeply. He designed them as one of life’s greatest joys—a way for His children to give and receive love. But while relationships are beautiful, they were never meant to define us. They were meant to *reflect* the One who does.

Our value doesn’t come from another person’s opinion or approval. It doesn’t rest on how a father treated us, how a boyfriend made us feel, or how a husband spoke to us. Our worth is anchored in the unchanging truth of who God says we are.

He is the **Creator**, the **Architect**, and the **Sustainer** of our souls.

Only He can fill the deep longing within us for identity, security, and belonging.

By grace through faith, Jesus has made you a **daughter of the King**.

He formed and fashioned you with care and intention.

“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (*Psalm 139: 13–14*)

Before anyone else spoke words over your life, God spoke *you* into existence.

The Voice That Defines You

Maybe your father told you, “*You’re too much.*”

Maybe a boyfriend once said, “*You’re nothing without me.*”

Maybe a husband insisted, “*You can’t make your own decisions.*”

But the truth is this:

Your Heavenly Father says, “*You are Mine.*”

He sees you exactly as He created you—beloved, intentional, and worthy.

He sees your imperfections and your sin, yet His love for you has never wavered. From the beginning of time, He had you in mind when He chose to give His Son’s life on the cross. Jesus willingly laid down His life so that your relationship with the Father could be restored.

When you place your trust in Jesus Christ as Lord, you are brought into God’s family—fully known, fully loved, fully led. The King of heaven calls you, His daughter.

Application for the Week

Read **John 13:13–17**, where Jesus says:

“You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.
If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet,
you also ought to wash one another’s feet.
For I have given you an example, that you also should do
just as I have done to you.”

As you reflect on Jesus’ model of servant leadership, identify someone in your life who looks to you as a leader—perhaps a child, coworker, friend, or ministry volunteer.

Ask yourself: *How can I serve them this week?*

It might be through encouragement, listening, practical help, or simply being present.

When we lead by serving, we reflect the heart of Christ—the greatest leader the world has ever known.

WEEK 6

Forgiveness

“You forgive because you can’t forget, and you forgive to rid your soul of the poison that could rob you of every spiritual thing you’ve ever accomplished.”

— *Jonas Beiler*

Forgiveness is one of the most freeing—and one of the most difficult—acts of obedience God calls us to. It runs against every instinct we have for justice, protection, and self-preservation. Yet forgiveness is also the heartbeat of the gospel. It is the very posture Jesus modeled on His final night with His disciples and in His final breath on the cross.

Jesus: The Servant Leader of Forgiveness

It was the night of Passover—the evening before Jesus’ crucifixion. In an upstairs room, Jesus gathered with His twelve disciples for the sacred meal. The air was heavy with both reverence and sorrow, though they didn’t yet understand why.

Then, in a moment no one could have imagined, the Son of God stood, wrapped a towel around His waist, and knelt to wash their feet. One by one, He cleansed the dirt and dust from the feet of the very men He had created—the same feet that would, in just a few hours, run away in fear.

This simple yet staggering act was not only about service. It was a living parable of the upside-down kingdom Jesus came to establish. In God’s economy, greatness is found in humility, power is expressed through love, and leadership looks like servanthood.

The Garden of Surrender

After the meal, Jesus led His friends to the garden of Gethsemane. There, the weight of what was coming pressed heavily upon Him. He prayed with anguish so deep that Scripture says His sweat became like drops of blood.

Even in His agony, He invited His disciples to pray with Him. But they fell asleep. Twice. The very ones He had poured His life into could not stay awake to support Him in His darkest hour.

Soon the guards arrived, and chaos erupted. Jesus was arrested, and His followers scattered in fear—just as He said they would.

Earlier that evening, bold-spoken Peter had insisted, “*Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will!*” (Matthew 26:33). But before dawn broke, Peter denied knowing Jesus not once, not twice, but three times—just as Jesus had foretold.

When the rooster crowed, Peter’s heart shattered. He ran from the courtyard and “wept bitterly.” (Matthew 26:75)

The Cross: Forgiveness in Motion

As Jesus was condemned by Caiaphas and delivered to Pilate, He endured unspeakable suffering—beaten, scourged, mocked, and nailed to a cross. The disciples hid in terror, watching their Teacher and Friend die the most humiliating death imaginable.

Yet even in His final moments, Jesus revealed the very essence of His mission:

“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” *Luke 23:34 (NIV)*

Forgiveness was not a sermon Jesus preached—it was the way He lived. Even while hanging between heaven and earth, He released those who betrayed, abandoned, and crucified Him.

The Restoration of Peter

After Jesus’ death, all seemed lost. The disciples returned to what they knew—fishing. Peter, once the most passionate follower, was now the most ashamed. But the story wasn’t over.

In *John 21*, we see the resurrected Jesus appear on the shore as Peter and several others fished all night without success. A familiar voice called out:

“Friends, have you caught anything?”

When they answered no, the voice replied,

“Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.”

As the nets overflowed with fish, realization flooded Peter's heart—*It's the Lord!* Without hesitation, he dove into the water and swam to Jesus.

On the shore, a fire crackled—much like the one Peter stood beside in the courtyard on the night when he betrayed Jesus. Breakfast was waiting—bread and fish prepared by the hands of the risen Savior. But Peter's shame still lingered. He had failed the one he loved most.

Then came the moment of redemption. Jesus asked him three times:

“Simon Peter, do you love Me?”

Each time Peter answered,

“Yes, Lord, You know I love You.”

And each time Jesus responded,

“Feed My sheep.”

Three questions. Three affirmations. Three denials redeemed.

Jesus wasn't shaming Peter—He was restoring him. With every repetition, He replaced Peter's failure with forgiveness. Jesus was saying, *You are still Mine. Your story isn't over. I still have a purpose for you.*

Forgiveness: The Heart of Our Healing

Forgiveness is not just something Jesus taught—it is who He is. It is the foundation of the gospel and the doorway to freedom.

Like Peter, we all have moments when we've denied, disappointed, or distanced ourselves from God. We all know the ache of regret. But Jesus meets us on the shore of our shame, invites us to breakfast, and restores us with grace.

To forgive doesn't mean to forget the hurt or pretend it didn't matter. It means releasing our grip on the offense so that bitterness cannot poison the soul. It's trusting God to be the righteous Judge while we choose to live free.

Forgiveness doesn't excuse the wrong; it releases the weight. It allows God to take what was broken and make it whole.

And as we forgive others—just as Christ forgave us—we mirror the love of the One who washed the feet of His betrayers and prayed mercy over His executioners.

That is what true forgiveness looks like.

That is the freedom of a daughter who walks in grace.

The Problem of Unforgiveness

Drs. **Henry Cloud** and **John Townsend** wisely distinguish between *hurt* and *harm*.

They explain that *hurt* is the temporary pain that comes from facing truth—pain that can lead to growth and healing. *Harm*, on the other hand, is the kind of damage that wounds the heart through abuse, manipulation, or emotional neglect. Hurt invites healing; harm requires deep restoration.

Throughout this study, we’ve talked about the ways fathers can fail—through neglect, absence, harshness, inconsistency, or a lack of leadership. Each of these failures can leave behind pain, and that pain can easily harden into *unforgiveness* if we’re not careful.

And while some wounds are undeniably severe and require wise, professional, or pastoral care, even the subtler disappointments—a father’s silence, his emotional distance, his lack of blessing—can still leave lasting marks on a daughter’s heart.

Unforgiveness often starts small, like a seed of disappointment we decide to keep. But over time, it grows roots that wrap around the soul. That’s why Scripture calls us to examine our hearts honestly and ask God to reveal where bitterness or resentment might still be hiding.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.” (*Psalms 139:23–24*)

What Happens When We Hold onto Unforgiveness

When we hold unforgiveness toward someone who has hurt or harmed us—especially a father—we can expect certain patterns to take root in our hearts. These patterns often go unnoticed at first, but they quietly shape our emotions, relationships, and even our spiritual life.

1. Broken Relationships and Isolation

Unforgiveness acts like a wall. It separates us—not just from the person who hurt us, but from others who try to love us. It keeps relationships shallow and guarded because deep down, we fear being wounded again.

When we withhold forgiveness, we are essentially saying, “*You owe me. You hurt me, and you must make it right.*” The problem is, that debt often remains unpaid. The person may never understand, never repent, or never be capable of making it right. Meanwhile, we stay bound to the pain, replaying the offense over and over again.

2. Trapped in the Past

When we cling to unforgiveness, we unintentionally step into the role of a *victim*. This doesn't mean we weren't genuinely wronged—it means we begin to *live from* the wound instead of living toward healing.

Victim thinking says, “*I can't move forward until they make it right.*”

But true freedom says, “*I can move forward because Jesus already made it right.*”

Remaining in a victim posture makes it difficult to take ownership of our own shortcomings, reactions, and choices. We become stuck in the story of what was done *to* us instead of the story of what God wants to do *in* us.

3. Bitterness and Resentment

Unforgiveness eventually curdles into bitterness. At first, it feels like self-protection—but over time, it becomes self-poison. Bitterness doesn't just affect how we see the person who hurt us; it colors how we see everyone else.

Resentment builds walls around our hearts. It keeps love out and pain in. The more we isolate, the more bitterness grows. And the more bitterness grows, the more we isolate. It becomes a painful cycle that can last years—even decades—if not broken by grace.

4. Emotional and Physical Toll

Unforgiveness doesn't just affect our souls—it can also affect our bodies. The stress of carrying unresolved anger or resentment can lead to anxiety, fatigue, headaches, digestive issues, or even chronic health problems.

Emotionally, it leads to depression, irritability, and low self-esteem. Spiritually, it clouds our discernment and drains our joy. It robs us of peace and can make prayer feel heavy and distant.

In short, unforgiveness depletes the very energy we need to live the abundant life God promises.

God's Invitation to Freedom

The good news is that God never asks us to forgive *on our own strength*. Forgiveness is not something we muster—it's something we *receive* first, then *extend*.

When we remember how much we've been forgiven by God, we find the courage to release others to Him. That release doesn't excuse what happened; it simply hands the gavel back to the only One who judges perfectly and heals completely.

Forgiveness says, “*God, I trust You to deal with this person and this pain in Your timing and Your way.*”

And when we do that, we're no longer defined by what was done to us—we're defined by the grace that rescued us.

Sandra's Story

Sandra grew up in a divorced home, spending every other weekend with her father. At times, those weekends were filled with laughter and lighthearted fun—trips to the park, ice cream runs, movie nights. But other times were very different. When her father drank heavily, his demeanor would change completely. The fun-loving dad became unpredictable, angry, and explosive.

In his drunken rage, Sandra endured physical, emotional, and verbal abuse. He never apologized or acknowledged the pain he caused. Instead of seeking forgiveness, he tried to make up for his outbursts with gifts and extravagant outings—new clothes, toys, or surprise adventures. To a young girl, these gestures were confusing. She learned that love could feel both safe and terrifying, that affection could turn to anger in an instant.

Over time, Sandra became skilled at reading her father's moods. She could tell by the tone of his voice or the look on his face whether it was going to be a "good weekend" or a "bad one." She learned to stay quiet, to please him, to avoid anything that might "rock the boat."

This survival skill—appeasing and adapting—helped her cope as a child, but it came at a great emotional cost.

The Lasting Impact

As an adult, Sandra carried those patterns into her relationships. She became what many would call "the helper," always attentive to the needs and emotions of others while neglecting her own. In friendships and romantic relationships, she gave until she was empty—pouring herself out, hoping that her love and effort would finally bring stability and peace.

But instead, she often found herself exhausted, unfulfilled, and quietly resentful. Deep down, Sandra struggled with guilt and shame—feelings she couldn't quite name and definitely couldn't escape. Her heart was weighed down by bitterness she didn't want to feel, yet couldn't release.

Just as her father failed to model seeking forgiveness, Sandra struggled to extend it—to him or to anyone else. The result was isolation, low self-esteem, and the same resentment she had once tried to avoid. Her inability to forgive became the very chain that kept her bound to the pain of her past.

The Lie of Unforgiveness

Women who grow up in homes where forgiveness was not modeled often learn, without even realizing it, to hold on tightly to pain. When wounds go unhealed, they give birth to a subtle but powerful lie: *“The one who hurt me is responsible for making me whole.”*

This lie convinces her that if she holds on long enough—if she remembers the wrong, replays it, and refuses to release it—then somehow justice will be served and safety will return. But unforgiveness never protects; it imprisons.

The lie of unforgiveness tells her:

“I must protect myself. If I let go, I’ll be hurt again.”

“People are untrustworthy. I am unsafe.”

Through this lens, the world feels dangerous, relationships feel risky, and the heart slowly hardens. She builds emotional walls—not just to keep others out, but to keep her pain in. Her defenses become her identity.

And as she continues to nurse the wound, she begins to define herself by it. The pain becomes the story she tells about who she is—a victim waiting for her offender to make things right before she can heal. But the truth is, waiting for an apology that may never come only keeps her bound to the very person who hurt her.

The Spiritual Distortion

Throughout this study, we’ve seen how a father’s failures can shape a daughter’s view of her Heavenly Father. When forgiveness is withheld or unmodeled, the wound runs even deeper—because forgiveness is the very *essence* of who God is.

Our Heavenly Father’s heart is one of mercy and grace. When we come to Him in humility and repentance, He never withholds forgiveness. He doesn’t make us earn it or prove we’re sorry enough. He forgives because that’s who He is.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (*1 John 1:9, ESV*)

“As far as the east is from the west, so far does He remove our transgressions from us.” (*Psalms 103:12, ESV*)

“Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.” (*Acts 3:19, ESV*)

God doesn't forgive reluctantly. He forgives completely—and His forgiveness becomes the model for how we're called to release others.

How Unforgiveness Affects Our Relationship with God

When our hearts remain hardened by unforgiveness, it not only hinders our ability to extend grace—it dulls our awareness of our own need for grace. A heart bound by resentment struggles to see its own sin clearly.

This isn't always out of rebellion—it's often out of numbness. We become so focused on the hurt done *to* us that we lose sight of our need to come *to* Him.

The wounds that plant seeds of unforgiveness don't just shape *what* we think about God; they shape *whether* we think of Him at all. We stop seeing Him as the answer to our pain and, instead, we see Him as distant or uninterested in it.

But the truth is this: forgiveness doesn't minimize your pain. It releases it into the hands of the only One who can heal.

When we forgive, we aren't letting the offender off the hook; we're letting ourselves off the chain.

The Truth

In Week 1, we explored God's perfect plan for creation—how everything He made was designed to reflect His beauty, order, and love. Out of that overflowing love, God created mankind in His image. He made us, not out of need, but out of *desire*. He wanted to share Himself with us and to live in eternal relationship with those He formed.

Because true love can never be forced, God gave humanity the freedom to choose—to receive His love and return it. Yet from the beginning, mankind chose rebellion instead of trust. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command not to eat from the tree in the garden, sin entered the story. That choice brought separation between a holy God and the people He loved.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (*Romans 6:23*)

Sin created a debt we could never repay—a chasm we could never bridge. God's holiness demanded justice, yet His love longed for mercy. And in His perfect wisdom, He provided both through Jesus Christ.

God's Perfect Plan of Forgiveness

Because only God Himself could repair what sin had destroyed, He came to earth in the person of His Son, Jesus. Jesus lived the perfect, sinless life we could not live. Then He took upon Himself the punishment our sin deserved—death and separation from the Father—so that we could be reconciled and restored.

The gift of Jesus is completely free. There's nothing we can do to earn it—only receive it. When we accept His payment for our sin, we are *forgiven*. In that moment, we are united with Him—made new, made clean, made family.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Through Jesus, the debt of our sin is fully canceled. The cross was God's declaration over humanity: “*It is finished.*”

Becoming Like the One Who Forgives

When we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, a new process begins—the slow, beautiful transformation of becoming more like Him. One of the defining characteristics of Christ is *forgiveness*. It is not simply what He does; it is *who He is*.

As His daughters, we are called to let that same forgiveness flow through us.

But it's important to remember what forgiveness is *and* what it isn't.

Forgiveness **is not** denial—it doesn't say the offense was okay.

It **is not** forgetting—it doesn't erase memory or pain.

It **is not** automatic reconciliation—it doesn't mean immediate trust.

Forgiveness *is* a decision of the heart: a choice to release the offender from the debt of making it right. It's saying, “You hurt me, but I will no longer hold you accountable to fix it.”

That's exactly what God did for us through Jesus. He never condoned our sin, but He removed its penalty. In Christ, God says, “*I no longer hold this against you—your debt has already been paid.*”

The Command to Forgive

Forgiveness isn't optional in the Kingdom of God—it's central. Jesus taught about forgiveness repeatedly, through parables and through His own life. From the story of the prodigal son (*Luke 15*) to the woman who anointed His feet (*Luke 7*) and the unmerciful servant (*Matthew 18*), His message was consistent: forgiveness is the heartbeat of the gospel.

“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you,
your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
But if you do not forgive others their sins,
your Father will not forgive your sins.” (*Matthew 6:14-15, NIV*)

Jesus didn’t teach forgiveness to burden us, but to *free* us. He knows that unforgiveness is a chain that keeps us bound. It keeps us from intimacy with Him and stunts us in our spiritual growth.

When we forgive, we walk in the likeness of our Savior. We participate in His redemptive work. And we live in the peace that comes from being fully known, fully loved, and fully free.

Questions for Insight

1. Serving with a Heart Like Jesus

Who did you serve last week? How did you serve them? How did your heart respond to that act of service? Did you notice joy, hesitation, or gratitude rising in you as you served?

2. Reflections on Harm and Healing

In what ways have you hurt or harmed others that are like the ways your father has hurt or harmed you?

How does it feel to recognize these patterns, and what might God want to teach you through that awareness?

3. Listening to Your Body

Our mind, heart, and body are beautifully connected.

Think of times when your father hurt or harmed you—where did you feel that pain in your body?

Now think of times when you may have hurt or harmed others—where do you feel that in your body?

How does your body feel different when you choose to forgive?

Healing Steps

1. Receive Before You Give

Forgiveness is a gift from Jesus Christ — and you can only give what you’ve already received.

Just like you must have \$20 before you can give \$20, you must first receive God’s forgiveness before you can extend it to others.

Spend time in prayer, asking God to show you anything you need to confess to Him. Seek His forgiveness first. This is where healing begins.

2. Identify the Holes and Cracks

In Week 1, *projection* was discussed— the “holes” and “cracks” that form in our hearts.

Cracks are the painful events that *should never have happened* (abuse, harsh words, betrayal).

Holes are the absences — the things that *should have happened* but didn’t (neglect, silence, lack of affection or presence).

Take time to pray and ask God to reveal the specific holes and cracks you received from your earthly father. Write them below as a way of bringing them into the light.

Holes:

Cracks:

3. Choose to Forgive

Remember: forgiveness is a decision to cancel the debt. It's saying, "You no longer owe me for the pain you caused."

When you're ready, choose to forgive your father for each of the holes and cracks you listed. Speak it out loud — "I forgive my dad."

Share your decision with a trusted friend, mentor, or family member. Saying it aloud helps silence the enemy's whisper that you haven't truly forgiven.

If painful feelings linger, don't be discouraged. That doesn't mean you haven't forgiven — it may simply mean God is revealing deeper layers of healing He wants to address. Continue to bring those feelings to Him in prayer and, if needed, seek wise counsel to process them fully.

Application for the Week

Author **Jamie Winship** (Identity Exchange) encourages believers to ask two simple but life-changing questions:

1. "God, what do You want me to know?"
2. "God, what do You want me to do?"

This week, after choosing forgiveness, take time to sit quietly with the Lord and ask these same questions.

Ask Him:

"God, what do You want me to know about my father now that I have forgiven him?"

Listen for His answer. Then ask:

"God, what do You want me to *do* with what You've shown me?"

Be still and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart.

Write down what He reveals, and walk forward in obedience and peace.

Conclusion

Throughout this journey, we've discovered how profoundly our experiences with our earthly fathers shape our understanding of our Heavenly Father. For many of us, those moments of neglect, abuse, inconsistency, absence, or emotional distance have left deep wounds. Some of us were overindulged, while others were unprotected or unseen. Still others lived under the weight of rigid expectations or the confusion of inconsistent boundaries.

Whatever your story, you are not alone.

We've learned that while earthly fathers are imperfect, our **Heavenly Father is perfect** in every way. He offers what our hearts were always meant to receive — *protection, provision, presence, compassionate correction, leadership, and forgiveness.*

Where your earthly father left **holes** and **cracks**, your Heavenly Father fills and restores. His love covers the gaps. His grace smooths the rough edges. His truth silences the lies that have shaped your identity.

Though the wounds may heal, the scars often remain. Yet, like the marks on the resurrected Jesus' hands, those scars are not marks of shame; they are signs of redemption. They remind us that what once hurt deeply has now been healed by a perfect Father's love. Your scars don't disqualify you; they testify to His power at work in you.

From Wounded to Whole

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.”(2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

God never wastes a wound. The very areas of your life that were once broken can become the places where His glory shines brightest. Just as **Esther** was called to courage “for such a time as this” (*Esther 4:14*), your healing equips you to help others find their own.

You were created on purpose, for a purpose. Your story — even the painful parts — can be used by God to bring freedom and comfort to others.

Your True Identity

No matter what your earthly father said or did, his words do not define you. Your identity is not rooted in your past, your pain, or your performance — it’s anchored in the unchanging truth of who **God says you are**.

You are loved.

You are chosen.

You are redeemed.

You are His.

It all started with a Father — and **He calls you His daughter**.

About the authors:

Bill Robison, M.A. is a dedicated pastoral counselor with 25 years of experience in the counseling field, complemented by 8 years in the pharmaceutical industry. His training includes certifications in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, allowing him to support individuals facing diverse challenges. In addition to his counseling work at Branches Counseling Center, Bill collaborates with his wife, Tracey, at Wisteria Retreats, where they foster healing and connection in a serene environment.

Tracey Robison, LPC-MHSP is a seasoned counselor with over three decades of experience in the field. As the founder of Wisteria Retreats and the Clinical Director of Branches Counseling Centers, Tracey has dedicated her career to helping individuals navigate life's challenges and achieve healing. She is a certified Murray Method Trauma Instructor and holds certifications in Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and EMDR, equipping her with a diverse skill set to support trauma recovery.

Beyond their professional achievements, Bill and Tracey cherish their personal life, celebrating over 30 years of marriage to their best friend. They enjoy spending quality time with their adult children, Marley and Walker. Bill and Tracey are also grateful for their faith, thankful He calls them His son and daughter, and embrace the joy and purpose that comes from their spiritual journey.