



This teaching outline was developed in support of the resource, ***Honor Your Father***.

This resource includes 80 different exercises designed to help you honor your heavenly Father, pray for your family's legacy, develop

a tribute to your father, and pass on a generational blessing to your children. This resource will equip you to honor your father and reset your family legacy!

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I. HONOR YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Honoring the real God is the first step toward honoring our earthly fathers. Honoring God is easy when we are freed from any vision of a harsh, "finger-pointing" God and begin to see a gentle, loving Father. Our hearts become enamored by His unconditional love the more our knowledge of who He is increases. The more we come to know the true character of our heavenly Father; the more freedom we have as we consider our imperfect earthly fathers.

As we begin to ponder our need to honor God as our Father, it is hard not to think of our individual perspectives of fatherhood. Our experiences with our earthly father most certainly inform our perspective of our heavenly Father.

A. Impressions of Fatherhood

We each have personal images intricately tied to the tender yet powerful word, father. For some, the visualization of a father is of an always-smiling, ready-to-embrace-you, tender man, who instantly promotes feelings of joy, and acceptance. Others remember the massive, outstretched hand that seemed to pull a never-ending supply of candy from his pockets. When some people hear the word father, it evokes images of a scowling, ruffled brow and disappointed frown that seemed to cut the heart of a child, desperately longing for expressions of his approval. Finally, others who may simply draw a blank when they try to visualize a father. Their memories are as blank as a fresh pack of computer paper—no matter how many pages they turn there is nothing—no calls, no visits, no talks with dad.

How do we honor our father when one out of every three American children will live in a home where their biological father is not present?



W3. Yielding to the Scripture's protective cautions and transforming power to bring life change in me

Colossians 3:16 Moment:
"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:
"Honor your father"
(Deuteronomy 5:16).

Take a moment to finish this statement and share it with the congregation:

My own journey in communicating honor to my father taught me ____.

No matter what impression the word father has left upon our heart, we are reminded of its significant presence in the pages of Scripture. We are lovingly exhorted to honor our Father in heaven and fathers on this earth (Deuteronomy 5:16). Yet how do we honor our father? This question is inevitable when one out of every three American children will live in a home where their biological father is not present.

Experience Scripture

"Honor your father and mother, as the Lord your God commanded you . . ."
(Deuteronomy 5:16).

Honoring your father includes fathers of all kinds—the attentive and neglectful, the kind and the abusive, followers of Jesus and those who do not. The command is not conditional. Honoring your father requires faith to walk through the process of honoring. To become an honoring person, you must have faith and confidence in your heavenly Father's loving nature, regardless of your earthly father's character. Additionally, honoring your father presupposes intimacy with Father God. Fulfilling the command to honor your father will be impossible in your own strength. Only as you yield to the Holy Spirit, will you find the prompting and power to *truly* honor.

Pause to pray a prayer of humility. First, tell God about your willingness to obey His command to honor your father. Next, tell God about any hesitancy you have about showing honor to your earthly father. Lastly, declare your reliance on the Holy Spirit.

"God, I am committed to obeying Your Word—every part of it. You've commanded me to honor my father and mother, so I want You to know that I ____."

"I yield to Your command, and at the same time, I am going to need Your help because ____."

"I am going to need Your Spirit to help me by ____."

"Jesus, remind me often of the love You have for me as my heavenly Father. Let my gratitude for how You love me empower me to strengthen and restore my relationship with my earthly father."

II. THE PROMISED BLESSING OF HONORING YOUR FATHER

The Scripture reminds us to *"Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you"* (Exodus 20:12, NLT). Unfortunately, many sons and daughters have never received the blessing of a father. Twenty million children live without their fathers today. Many dads have failed to step to the plate and be the fathers that God hard-wired them to be. Some have missed the mark because of bad choices, some because of selfishness, and some because they followed in the steps of their own fathers.

Any effort to honor our earthly father must begin with a life devoted to honoring our heavenly Father. Honor starts by fearing God and

"...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me..."
(Galatians 2:20).

"...God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him"
(1 John 4:16b).



W7. A life explained as one of "experiencing Scripture"

Colossians 3:16 Moment:
"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:

Take a moment to answer each of these statements for yourself then share vulnerably with the congregation your reflections.

Once you have done that, complete the following sentence and share with the congregation:

"As an admittedly imperfect (spiritual or physical) parent/father, I hope my children will _____."

recognizing that we can only love others because God's sacrificial love for us, through His son Jesus Christ, lives in us—empowering us.

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Galatians 2:20).

"...God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him" (1 John 4:16b).

Only through the recognition of our frailty and utter dependence on Christ, are we enabled to love others, speak words of life, and truly convey honor to another person. Before making any attempts to honor others, first take spiritual inventory of your heart and relationship with God.

Whatever your family legacy, Jesus is the reset, and Jesus changes everything. He is not only interested in changing your eternity but also your daily life. If you are a child of God, you have incredible promises to live by. He made you for so much more than one-generational faith. When we abandon our agendas and follow Jesus, we leave a legacy of living faith for future sons and daughters in the kingdom of God.

Engage Community

"You must not have any other god but me" (Exodus 20:3).

"Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).

To honor is to show abundant, merited respect and to affirm great worth and value. We have a "vertical" command to honor and affirm the great worth of our heavenly Father. We have a "horizontal" command to honor our earthly father. Sometimes, the two commands may seem to be in conflict with one another.

Pause to complete the following statements.

"God commands me to honor Him and respect Him. I have no struggle with that when it comes to _____."

"I do struggle to honor God with _____."

"When it comes to my relationship with my earthly father, there have been times when it has been hard to honor him because _____."

In groups of two or three, share how you completed those sentences.

III. HONORING IMPERFECT FATHERS

Sadly, the number of people who are afraid of their father is astounding. That fear negatively impacts their lives, even if they are unaware of it. They usually also have a skewed image of God, believing Him to be wrathful, angry, or hostile. Their God is a person they want to avoid, and that is depressing because we know that Scripture says He loves us.

A young woman taught Sunday school in an inner-city mission project. "In the projects," she says, "when you talk to the kids, you never refer to God as father. With these inner-city kids, 'father' is likely to bring up thoughts of the man who left me, the man who beats me, the guy who beats my mother. The kids have so many negative images of fathers. So

we always refer to God as a best friend. The kids know what that is. It's a positive concept. We start there and work into God's other attributes."

What About You?

Maybe you had a horrible father. That may well affect your relationship with God. You may be wise for you to think first of God as a best friend. Approach Him as a best friend. That's not an untruth; best friend is one of His key attributes, solidly rooted in Scripture (John 15:15). Acknowledging this truth may open the door to a deeper relationship between you and God.

Consider the vast difference between God and your earthly father. What do you wish your father *had* been? Easier to get close to? Angrier when you deserved it? Spend a while transferring that wish list over to your concept of God.

Next, decide how you want your children to see God. As your father shaped your view of God, so shall you shape your children's view of Him. Think about how much of that concept you are showing them as their earthly father. Are you exemplifying:

- An angry, disciplining God?
- A gentle, affectionate God?
- A wise, protective guide?
- A just, judge of behavior?
- A good provider?
- A loving mentor?



W9. Living abundantly "in the present" as His Word brings healing to hurt, anger, guilt, fear, and condemnation—which are *heart hindrances* to life abundant

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:

"Speak words that edify"
(Ephesians 4:29).

"I appreciate my father for ____."

(His sense of humor, diligence, the way he provided for our family, etc.)

Encounter Jesus

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts . . ." (Colossians 3:15).

Reflect for a few moments about the areas where your father might have struggled. What were some of his weaknesses, and how did those weaknesses impact you? What hurts or painful moments did you experience in your relationship with your dad?

First, tell these to the God of all comfort. He wants to comfort your heart and bring you peace.

"God, I need Your comfort about ____."

"It was a really painful time in my relationship with my father when ____."

"Heavenly Father, would You show me what You feel for me as You see me and the hurt I've experienced."

Allow the Holy Spirit to comfort your heart. Let Him remind you that the God of all comfort can't wait to show you compassion (Isaiah 30:18). He hurts when you hurt; He weeps because you weep (See John 11:35–36). Allow the Comforter to comfort you even now.

After receiving comfort from God about the ways you have experienced hurt, you are now freer to honor your father with a grateful heart. Reflect on the character strengths and qualities you appreciate in your father.

IV. THE CALL TO HONOR

“For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you” (1 Corinthians 4:15, NLT).

The apostle Paul was a spiritual father in the early church. *“For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you” (1 Corinthians 4:15, NLT).*

Although he was a spiritual father for many early Christian communities, Paul’s personal spiritual fathering role is seen most clearly in his relationship with Timothy. Paul, heeding the advice of the brethren, selected Timothy to travel with his ministry team (Acts 16:2). Timothy came from a family in which his mother was a believer and his father was not (Acts 16:1). Timothy had a strong Christian heritage from his mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). Yet Timothy needed a spiritual father to help him to reach his full potential in Christ. Paul called Timothy his son (1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2:1) in the faith.

The model of Paul and Timothy is one of the clearest in Scripture for defining the roles of spiritual parents and spiritual children. The writings recorded in 1 and 2 Timothy are the instructions of a spiritual father to his spiritual son. Timothy’s faithful discharge of service is a prime example of the commitment needed by spiritual sons and daughters. Timothy served Paul in the good times and the bad (Acts 16). Timothy could be trusted (Philippians 2:19–20). Timothy was empowered by Paul to do the work of ministry (1 Timothy) and was corrected by Paul in the midst of that work (2 Timothy). At the end of his journey, Paul’s spiritual son, Timothy, ministered to the aged apostle (2 Timothy 4:9–21).

Christianity has survived throughout history because one generation has passed their faith to another.

Christianity has survived throughout history because one generation has passed their faith to another. Sometimes we have been more successful at this than at other times. The twenty-first century has brought us to a new season of spiritual transition, one in which the younger generation must not move too fast, and the older generation must push themselves to get the baton passed. We are intersecting together in God’s passing zone. If we follow the pattern of Scripture, spiritual fathers and mothers will not fail to impart to their spiritual sons and daughters the passion, purpose, and purity needed to finish the race. Together, we can win. Apart, we will be disqualified.

To teach children the ideal attitude, which is a love for God and God’s Word, dad should be seen enjoying God’s Word for what it is—a love letter, a beautiful piece, rather than a hammer to beat kids over the head. Taking pleasure in God and His Word is key.

Here the father takes the lead by believing he can get to know God by studying His Word. He knows he won’t get to know God by watching TV. He will know the person of God by reading His love letter.



W3. Yielding to the Scripture's protective cautions and transforming power to bring life change in me

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:

"Walk in the light" (John 12:35).

Complete the following sentence and share it vulnerably with the congregation:

I hope that my children have noticed that God's Word _____.

"Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).

Experience Scripture

"Walk in the light while you can . . ." (John 12:35).

"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

Fathers and spiritual fathers, who are worthy of honor, walk in the light of God's Word and lead their families along the same path.

Take a moment to reflect on what your children are seeing about your life. Are they seeing you work diligently to walk in the light of God's Word? Are they seeing you read God's Word and letting it guide your choices and lifestyle?

"When I reflect on what my children see about my life, I sense that _____."

Make plans to talk about your observations with a prayer partner or small group. Ask them to hold you accountable for how God might want you to allow His Word to continue to direct your life.

Pray together, asking the Lord to guide you along the narrow path of His Word.

V. WORTHY OF HONOR

"Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the Lord your God is giving you" (Exodus 20:12).

This commandment is easy for some, challenging-but-possible for others. Yet, it stands as God's will for children of every age and all circumstances. So much is lost when we neglect this command—the emotional connection of expressed love, the bonding of generations, the healing of past pain, and the real possibility of family reconciliation.

Let's consider how we can become a parent worthy of honor by building these qualities into our lives.

A. Principle #1: Your children will remember your involvement.

Your children need more than your time; they need your attention. They flourish when you focus on them.

This means more than just showing up at soccer games. Children need your heart knitted to theirs as they make choices and hammer out their character. They need you to know what's happening in their lives. They need you to help them think about the clothing they wear, the type of person they date, and the peer pressure they face.



P5. Ministering His life and love to our *nearest ones* at home and with family as well as faithful engagement in His body, the church

Engage Community

"This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor (near ones) as yourself'" (Matthew 22:38–39).

Out of our love of the Lord and our life-changing experiences with His Word flows the empowering grace to share His life and love with our spouse, children, and others. Remember: The ministry of God's love begins at home. Our nearest neighbors are God's ordained starting places for exercising His love. Whether it is our spouse, our children, family member, or friends, a ministry of love must begin with those closest to us.

Men, who are worthy of honor, are to follow Christ's example by taking the initiative to serve the needs of their near ones.

Make plans to pray with a prayer partner or small group. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal one way that you can better love your near ones according to Christ's example.

"Holy Spirit, show me how I can love my _____ (wife, children, family, friend) in a way that looks like You. I want to love these nearest ones like You love me. I'm listening, Lord."

B. Principle #2: Your children will remember your emotional support.

How often do you tell your children you love them, or forgive them? Your kids should hear these words so often that they have no idea how often you've said them.

Another way to give your children emotional support is by utilizing the power of the printed word. Letters and notes are tangible reminders to your children that you love and care for them. Young children, especially, will treasure your handwritten notes of affection.

By filling and refilling our child's emotional tank, you and I become worthy of honor.



P5. Ministering His life and love to our *nearest ones* at home and with family as well as faithful engagement in His body, the church

Experience Scripture

"Now that you have obeyed the truth, love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

How might you better express Christ's love to your children?

Make plans to show love to your child in one of these three ways. You might write a note or share these words in person:



P2. Startling people with loving initiatives to give first

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:

"Love one another deeply from the heart" (1 Peter 1:22).

Share about one or all of these three ways that you have tried to express Christ's love to your children.

1. Appreciation (for things they do)

"_____ (Say the name of each child), I appreciate all that you do to make our family great. I've especially noticed how you _____. Thank you for the way you help with _____."

2. Encouragement (in the midst of a struggle)

"_____ (Say the name of each child), I know that it's been hard to _____, but I know you can _____. I want to encourage you in _____ because I believe in you and know that you _____."

3. Celebration (about a positive event in their life)

Neil Postman said, "[Our] children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see." As a parent, what kind of message are you sending to the next generation? Is your message and your life worthy of being emulated and honored?

Men, your hearts need to be connected to the hearts of your children. You may need to cry out in prayer to the Divine Surgeon who specializes in that type of surgery. The last verse of the Old Testament, Malachi 4:6, gives us His promise: *"And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction."*

SHARE with Others in Community

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him" (1 John 5:14).

After you have effectively prioritized your own children and grandchildren, ask Jesus to show you a person within your sphere of influence who is "fatherless." Ask God to show you how you can be a spiritual father to this person. Discuss this insight with a prayer partner or small group, and then pray together.

"Heavenly Father, do in my heart and life whatever You need to do for me to impart my life and the gospel. Help me to accept any role You have for me as a spiritual father. Thank You for hearing my prayer and accomplishing Your will in my life."