

# What Every Christian Should Know

## Lesson 5

### God the Father

#### Introduction

**[TEACHERS: You can use the following story in the third person (“There was a boy whose dad was a life guard...”). Or, you could tell a story from your own childhood in relation to your father.]**

My dad was a life guard from Memorial Day to Labor Day, the best time of the year. When he wasn't life guarding he worked at San Bernardino High School, he was a vice principal. Working at the school gave him plenty of free time during the summer. But, my dad was never one to sit around much, from need or want he always seemed to be working somewhere. Once he worked for Kaiser steel company. He ran a machine which poured steel into a huge metal pot. He nearly burned the place down by rushing the amount of steel being poured into a huge chamber... The next summer he took a little less risky position at the local grocery store. He was great about work, though. My mom once told me about a time when he missed his first day of work in 17 years. The only reason the streak didn't go longer was because a snowstorm dropped 6 feet of snow on the ground and his car was 40 feet from the road. It was early in the morning and he was furiously shoveling to make it to school on time but, as he was making his way toward the street the city snow plow roared by and piled up an 8 foot wall of compacted snow at the point where he was planning to exit, he stood up, sighed, took the shovel back to the tool shed and the streak was over.

One of the benefits of working as a life guard, aside from the plaid shorts with the life guard patch sewed to the bottom right hem, was that he had the key to the pool. And, he was given the freedom to use the pool whenever it was closed to the public. When he took our family to the pool I discovered that I loved the water! I thought holding my breath under water was about the best thing you could do. My dad tried to teach me to swim on top of the water... but, it wasn't sticking, I seemed to sink like a rock.

But what I really wanted to do most was dive into the pool. I watched my dad dive in over and over and he was good at it. It was a low diving board, but he would jump so high and land so hard on the end of the board that he'd be launched in flight high out over the water.

He'd spread his arms wide like a bird, slowly peaking in an arch as gravity pulled him back to earth. He made a small splash when his body disappeared below the surface, "that's what I want to do!" I thought. **But the problem was when I walked out to the end of the diving board, I couldn't bring myself to dive in.** First of all the low dive didn't seem so low to me. It looked like a mile away! Secondly, the water on that side of the pool was different - it was bluer than where I spent most of my time. My dad and brother had a name for that side of the pool that scared me, they called it the "deep end". So, although I wanted to dive off the low dive I did the next best thing I could think of, I jumped off the first step of the pool in the shallow end making as big a splash as I could. I splashed around all summer, **always talking about diving but, never actually doing it.** And, the more I talked about it the more it bothered my dad.... **And I wouldn't stop talking about how, "today I'm going to dive in!" Then, when I'd get to the pool, I'd chicken out again.** Finally during the last week of the summer my dad called me over to the diving board. I thought he was going to show me something about the board. And, he did! He grabbed me by the shorts and put his arm under my chest and "helped" me make my first dive into the pool!

He was a great dad but, the bottom line was he tossed his son in the pool! Now regardless of the fact that I deserved to be tossed in the pool... and, in-fact he demonstrated remarkable restraint all summer long during all my chatter. The fact is that I've often carried the reality of my dad tossing me into the pool back when I was 8 with me through today. Every now and then when life is rough I find myself wondering, is God going to toss me in the deep end now?"

That's a problem. We live with our fallen, finite dads, if we're lucky (some kids have absent fathers). But, they give us a less than perfect picture of our Father in Heaven. Too often we think that if our earthly fathers demonstrate a certain characteristic then, our heavenly Father must be the same. If we have a negative image of our earthly dads we often have a negative impression of our perfect Heavenly Father.

Another problem we have in understanding our Heavenly Father is ourselves. We know what kind of fathers we are to our kids. We know how often we've overreacted, been too lenient or too dogmatic. We often have a hard time disassociating our own failures from our flawless Heavenly Father.

A third problem we have in understanding our heavenly Father is simply a lack of biblical instruction on who He is. So, today we want to focus on God as our Father, from His instruction book for life, the Bible.

The following is from our website Second.org - this is a brief summation of what we believe about God the Father... “...**there is one God. He is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He eternally exists in three personalities: The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit. These three are co-equal and one. He is perfect in His many attributes of holiness, love, power, knowledge, justice and mercy.**”

**J.I. Packer** writes in his book *Knowing God* – “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new and better than the Old, everything that is distinctively Christian, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God the Father.”

Three thoughts on God our Father we'd like to focus on this morning: His love, His power and His knowledge.

#### 1. **He is a Father who wants to talk with you:**

APPLICATION QUESTION: How many of you had fathers with whom you had tremendous times of conversation? For many of us our earthly dads weren't always ready or available to talk. We have a Father who loves us with such a great love and He wants to talk to you!

[Matthew 6:5-15](#) - Read

RC Sproul writes that, “In almost every prayer that Jesus utters in the New Testament, He addresses God as Father... This represents a radical departure from Jewish custom and tradition. Though Jewish people were given a lengthy number of appropriate titles for God in personal prayer, significantly absent from the approved list was the title “Father...”

“Our Father”, *Tabletalk Magazine*, 2007

Personal Illustration...

Your prayer life is one of the key foundations of life. I remember the first time I heard of the critical nature of prayer in our walk with the Lord. One preacher calls prayer spiritual breathing. He says that just like we are regular in our physical breathing, in fact you'd suffocate and pass out if you tried to stop, so we are spiritually suffocating when we go for

long stretches of time without prayer. He's the Father that longs to listen to you. He's the Father that longs to speak truth to you. He's the Father that loves you perfectly.

APPLICATION: Take a minute and honestly look at your response to His love. Are you a prayerful person? Is there a quality and quantity of time devoted to prayer?

Conversation with God is simply good listening and limited speaking. When you know you have someone who loves you, you want to talk to them.

Since we have a Father in heaven who loves us so much shouldn't we be committed to developing that relationship with Him in prayer?

## 2. He's a Father who has unlimited power:

Exodus 6:2-8 Read...

"The greatest single distinguishing feature of the omnipotence of God is that our imagination gets lost thinking about it." **Blaise Pascal, scientist and philosopher**

APPLICATION: Have you recently thought about the power of God? That there is nothing He cannot do, there is nothing outside of His strength. His power is unlimited.

One of the most logical responses then, to the power of God is peace. Over and over again we are commanded in the Bible to be at peace, to fear not, to be anxious for nothing. David wrote in Psalm 56:3 and 4 "When I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. <sup>4</sup> In God, whose word I praise, In God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can *mere* man do to me?

The National Institute of Mental Health tells us that the number one mental illness in America is anxiety disorders. If you are like most people in our culture you are driven by a number of fears. Fears regarding finances, fears regarding health, fears regarding family, fears regarding security... the list goes on almost without end!

We have a Father in heaven who's love is without measure, His power is so total that you can't limit it. If you have that kind of Father in heaven what do you have to fear?

APPLICATION: Take a moment and identify your top 3 fears....

Now, take a moment to take them to your Father whose power is sufficient.

### 3. He's a Father who knows you completely and forgives you totally.

God loved you and me so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins. He's paid the sin debt that I have racked up. No one else can forgive my sins. No one else has that kind of power or ability. Only God alone can make that kind of payment on my account. My debt to Him is insurmountable, it's a debt that I could never repay no matter how many lifetimes I spent trying to do that. He's been that generous with you and me in using His power to pay my debt... and He's the only one that could forgive. This is something He does without reservation!

There's a story Jesus tells in the New Testament book of Luke. One that is familiar around the world. It's called the parable of the prodigal son.

Luke 15:11-32 read selected verses.

Tim Keller in his wonderful book, The Prodigal God writes about this section of Scripture, "The younger son comes within sight of the house. His father sees him and runs --- runs to him! As a general rule, distinguished Middle Eastern patriarchs did not run. Children might run; women might run' young men might run. But, not the paterfamilias, the dignified pillar of the community, the owner of the great estate. He would not pick up his robes and bare his legs like some boy. But this father does. He runs to his son and, showing his emotions openly, falls upon him and kisses him." The Prodigal God. Pg. 25,26.

That is a picture of our Father that I have never gotten over. The more I understand of the Middle Eastern culture the more I am amazed at this parable that Jesus tells... and I'm stunned at how quickly and completely our Father has forgiven us.

APPLICATION: Since we have been forgiven so completely doesn't it make sense that we are known as a people of forgiveness? It's something that is logical but, not easy.

### Conclusion

Louie Zamperini was an Olympic athlete shot down in the Pacific during WW2. Because of his status as an Olympian he was singled out as "prisoner # 1" by a guard who was passionate about bringing discipline to the prisoners of war. His treatment of Zamperini left him physically and emotionally scarred for life. When Louie was released after the war he was haunted by hatred. He found himself now racing toward alcoholism, unemployment

and divorce. Even though he was now free from the P.O.W. camp, his life was falling apart. And at the heart of his problems was his desire for revenge on this one guard.

Finally Louie wrote his former tormentor: "To Matsuhiro Watanabe – As a result of my prisoner of war experience under your unwarranted and unreasonable punishment, my post-war life became a nightmare. It was not so much due to the pain and suffering as it was the tension of stress and humiliation that caused me to hate with a vengeance. Under your discipline, my rights, not only as a prisoner of war but also as a human being, were stripped from me. It was a struggle to maintain enough dignity and hope to live until the war's end.

The post-war nightmares caused my life to crumble, but thanks to a confrontation with God through the evangelist Billy Graham, I committed my life to Christ, love replaced the hate I had for you. Christ said, forgive your enemies and pray for them.

As you probably know, I returned to Japan in 1952 and was graciously allowed to address all the Japanese war criminals at Sugamo Prison... I asked then about you, and was told that you probably had committed Hara Kiri, which I was sad to hear. At that moment, like the others, I also forgave you and now would hope that you would also become a Christian." Louis Zamperini pg. 397 Unbroken

APPLICATION: Since we have a Father in heaven that knows everything about you, every failure and disappointment that you might use to define yourself, He knows everything and He has chosen to forgive the sins of all who would place their faith in Jesus Christ death on the cross. Shouldn't we be a people who are known for their forgiveness? Is there someone in your past that you are unwilling to forgive and it's killing you?

In summary:

1. His love is so great, how can you change your prayer life to reflect a greater devotion to Him?
2. His power is without measure, are you consistently battling your fears and taking them to Him?
3. His knowledge is complete, how can you take a step towards being the forgiving person that would reflect His forgiveness of you... despite what He knows about you.

