

God as Father

STEP 1 Life Need (5–10 minutes)

- Write advertisements for the ideal father.
- *Optional:* Bring in ads for examples.
 - Paper
 - Pencils or pens
 - (Optional) Help wanted section from the newspaper

STEP 2 Bible Learning (15–20 minutes)

- See the characteristics of God the Father.
- Compare God’s characteristics with those of the ideal human father.
- *Optional:* Read a *Blueprint* story.
 - Bible
 - Copies of *Blueprint*
 - Paper, pencils or pens
 - Whiteboard and markers
 - (Optional) “Less than Love” from *Blueprint*

STEP 3 Bible Application (5–10 minutes)

- List various responses to God’s presence in the life of the Christian.
 - “Growing Up without a Father” from *Blueprint*

STEP 4 Life Response (about 5 minutes)

- Invite those who do not have a relationship with God to seek Him out.
 - Bibles

Memory Verse

“If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!”

—Matthew 7:11

Bible Basis:

God, who brought us and our world into being (Acts 17:24-29), shows His love for His children by providing for our needs (Matt. 7:9-12; Gal. 3:26).

Bible Truth:

God is the Father of all creation but is uniquely the Father of those who trust Christ as Savior.

Lesson Aim:

That your students become children of their heavenly Father through faith in Christ Jesus.

UNDERSTANDING

THE BIBLE

During Paul’s second missionary journey, he visited Athens, the great ancient city of Greece. At a meeting of the Areopagus [air-e-OPP-ah-guss], where people came to present and discuss their philosophies, Paul spoke to the Athenian philosophers, proclaiming God as the Creator of all things, including the heavens and the earth.

In Acts 17:24-29, Paul contrasted the living God with their gods. According to Paul, human thought did not create God, nor does God dwell in pagan temples. Instead, God determines the fate of the human race. Indeed, each person is dependent on God for his or her life.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers how to pray by presenting a model for them (Matt. 6:6-14). One of the key requests in His prayer is that we ask God for “our daily bread” (vs. 11). This request not only demonstrates our dependency on God, but it also acknowledges that our heavenly Father has the power to provide for our needs.

Those people who are of special concern to God are, of course, His children. In Galatians 3:26, Paul said all who have faith in Christ Jesus are God’s children. Therefore, they receive the full rights of being His heirs (Gal. 4:5-7). In fact, they are co-heirs with Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:17).

At the same time Jesus indicated that some very

Continued on next page

indicates items you will need to prepare before class

UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE —cont'd

religious people had “the devil” as their “father” (John 8:44). This clearly indicates that it is not enough for people to assume they are acceptable to God as His creatures. All of us need to enter God’s family by means of the new birth (John 3:3-5; Gal. 3:26).

TIPS

CLASSROOM

Whenever a youth Bible study that draws analogies between earthly fathers and the heavenly Father is done, there is a risk that some students will be alienated. This is because their earthly fathers do not in any way reflect God’s goodness.

This lesson is very deliberate in its comparison and contrast between earthly fathers and the heavenly Father. If one of your students comes from an abusive or negligent home, emphasize the contrasts in this study. Every positive characteristic children long for from their biological fathers can be found in God..

PRESESSION ACTIVITY



Objective: That your students assemble a map puzzle of their hometown.

- Map of the city you live in or a city close by

Before class time, glue a map of your city to a piece of poster board. Cut it into separate neighborhoods. As students enter, give each an equal number of pieces, and ask them to reassemble the map. Encourage the students to tell stories about the different areas of their hometown as they work together.

Understanding Your Students

Even though parental authority is a sore point for many teens, they still have a deeply felt need to belong to a family. Many children dream of being special to Mom and Dad. They long to be alone with parents and receive their love. This kind of parent-child relationship is possible with our heavenly Father.

While families can treat members fairly or unfairly, God treats each as a favored child. Each is a unique individual as God’s adopted child. He gives each one personal and special attention.

In these secure bonds, teens can find abiding love and acceptance. They find the soil to grow spiritually, despite the dysfunctional nature of many families today.



STEP 1

Life Need
(5–10 minutes)

Lesson Aim:

That your students become children of their heavenly Father through faith in Christ Jesus.

Objective: That your students write an advertisement giving the responsibilities and qualifications of a father.

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils or pens

Let your students imagine they have been given an assignment to hire a dad. This will focus their attention on the qualities and responsibilities of a father.

None of us had any choice about who our father would be. But what if the system changed, and you could choose your father as an employer chooses someone for a job? Or you could advertise for the most suitable father? What qualities would you look for in a father? What would you expect of him?

Pass out paper and pencil to each person.

To inform applicants about your expectations, make up an advertisement giving the responsibilities of a father and the qualifications you feel he must have. The ad can be in the form of a radio announcement or a “Help Wanted” classified ad in the daily newspaper.

Encourage students to be creative as they write their ads. After several minutes, have volunteers read their ads to the class.

As students read their ads, summarize the qualifications and duties they mention and list them on a whiteboard or a piece of newsprint. What you write on the board should contain the thought expressed by the student in a general form that allows for comparison with God’s fatherly characteristics. For example, someone might say, “My father must be sensitive to my problems.” You could write on the board “Caring.” Or “My father should be able to forgive me when I mess up.” You could write on the board “Forgiving.”

A few of the points mentioned may be contrary to the traits of a good father, but list these anyway. Later in the lesson students will eliminate those qualities unlike God the Father.

Leave these qualities on the board until later in the class.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

- Help wanted section from the newspaper

If you can, bring in several pages of Help Wanted ads for the students to scan as they do the above activity. They could copy the format of some of the ads by using different writing styles and headings.



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STEP 2

Bible Learning

(15–20 minutes)

Bible Basis:

God, who brought us and our world into being (Acts 17:24-29), shows His love for His children by providing for our needs (Matt. 6:6-14; Gal. 3:26).



Objective: That your students identify some of God's fatherly characteristics.

Materials:

- Bibles
- Copies of *Blueprint*
- Paper
- Pencils or pens
- Whiteboard and markers

Have students turn to the Bible study on page 33 of *Blueprint*. After students have answered the Bible study questions, go over their answers in class. For your convenience the Bible study is reprinted for you here along with possible answers like those your students might suggest.

■ FROM *Blueprint*—God is the Perfect Father

By virtue of being the Creator, God is the Father (or life-giver/source) of everyone—Christians and non-Christians. But He is uniquely the Father of only those who have been redeemed and adopted by Him.

List three creative things God did according to Acts 17:24-28.

If one of your students just says “He created the world!” press him or her to be more specific. For instance: He gives life and breath to everyone; He established the human race; He takes care of all our needs; He establishes the boundaries for our lives. He did all these things so that we might seek Him.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE



Acts 17:24-29

²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands.





²⁵And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else.

²⁶From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring.”

²⁹Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill.

-  According to Acts 17:27, what was God's purpose in creating human beings? (*God created human beings so that He could have a relationship with them.*)
-  In verse 28, Paul quotes a non-Christian poet who said, “We are God's offspring.” In what sense is every human being the offspring of God? (*In the sense that God is Creator, He has “fathered” all, Christians and non-Christians. But this kind of fatherhood is strictly paternal; He is responsible for the existence of all people.*)

Read 7:9-12.

-  What did Jesus mean in verse 11 when He said, though you are evil, you know how to give good gifts to your children? (*Everyone is a sinner, and no one is perfect like God. Yet parents still love their children and usually try to care for them as best they can*)
-  What kinds of gifts do earthly fathers give their children? (*Most earthly fathers show their love to their children by giving them material presents. The illustration in Matthew 7:9-12 is of a father giving his son bread and fish.*)
-  What kinds of gifts does God give His children? (*Because God is concerned about His children's character, He gives spiritual gifts that help His children become more like Jesus. He also provides gifts that can be used to serve others.*)
-  Explain Galatians 3:26 to someone who says to you, “God is everyone's Father. What's so special about the Christian?” (*Christians are “new creations,” indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and adopted into God's family. For those who are “born of the Spirit” [John 3:5-8], there is a loving parent-child relationship with God. When we become children of God, Christ's righteousness is transferred to us.*)

Matthew 7:9-12

⁹Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?¹⁰Or if he asks for a fish, will you give him a snake? ¹¹If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! ¹²So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the prophets.

⁹This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, ¹⁰your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us today our daily bread. ¹²Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ¹³And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. ¹⁴For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Galatians 3:26

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

There is also a legal relationship involved. God adopted us so we are His heirs and joint heirs with Christ [Rom. 8:17]. All that He has belongs to us [Eph. 1:3-15].)

Call students' attention to the qualities on the whiteboard or poster board describing their "ideal" father.

▶ **How many of these characteristics also describe God the Father?** *Place a check mark next to those characteristics your students indicate God has in common with their "ideal" fathers.*

Some students may identify characteristics that you don't think describe God the Father. To clarify these instances, ask your students to back up their choices with examples from Scripture. Then let students resolve any disputed questions by an informal vote. If the vote is at all close, it's probably best to avoid a distracting conflict by saying something like, "I guess we're not too sure about that one." Then leave it alone and go on to other characteristics.

Have one student read the memory verse aloud while the others follow along.

Matthew 7:11

"If you, then, though you are evil,
know how to give good
gifts to your children,
how much more will your
Father in heaven give good gifts
to those who ask him!"

▶ **How is God the Father similar to a good earthly father? How is He different? In one short sentence, summarize what you think is the relationship between good earthly fathers and God the Father.** *Encourage students to think about what the memory verse is implying and to analyze the information on the board as they're answering this question. Also encourage them to take their time in preparing a well-thought-out answer.*

Be sensitive to those whose earthly fathers have not been good models of our heavenly Father. Even the best of earthly fathers disappoint us sometimes because they also sin. Some young people have a hard time understanding God as Father at all because their fathers are such poor examples. Studying the fatherhood of God can actually help them find healing as they see the innate weakness of all men and the goodness of God. He is a father to the fatherless (Ps. 27:10 and 68:5).

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Materials:

□ "Less Than Love" from *Blueprint*

If you have time, read "Less Than Love" from page 6 of *Blueprint*. This article addresses the issue of viewing God as a father when an earthly father fails.



STEP 3

Bible Application

(5–10 minutes)

Objective: Your teens will read a story related to God as Father.

Materials:

- “Growing Up without a Father” from *Blueprint*

Remind students that a relationship is a two-way street. **Since God is our heavenly Father, we Christians are His children. Just as He is a caring Father to us, we are to be devoted children to Him.**



Have your students turn to pages 4 and 5 in their copy of *Blueprint*. Have various teens take turns reading the story “Growing Up without a Father” aloud. Be sure they read the section about about moms as well.

Hand out a sheet of paper, an envelope, and a pencil or pen to each student. Instruct teens to write a letter to God thanking Him for being a perfect Father to them. Ask them to describe specific examples of how God has demonstrated His fatherhood to them and ways that they will live as His children this week. Some examples of this might be spending time in prayer; telling their Father how much they love Him; asking for His help; and just spending time with Him. Other ways they might try to treat God as a father are being open to His leading in their lives, obeying what He tells them to do, and respecting His Word as a book worth reading and getting to know.

A relationship takes time and communication. If you didn’t talk to your parents for a week, things around your house might be very tense. You wouldn’t know what they expected from you or how much they loved you. They’d start to wonder why you were being so distant.

Why don’t we view our relationship with God like that? For some reason, it doesn’t seem like as big of a deal to go a week without spending time with Him. But it is. We need our Father each day. He wants us to devote ourselves to Him. And He wants to keep the line of communication between us and Him open all the time.

Unlike our relationship with our moms and dads, we’re not ever going to need God less. In fact, growing as a Christian means learning how to depend on our Father more and more all the time.



STEP 4

Life Response

(5–10 minutes)

Bible Truth:

God is the Father of all creation but is uniquely the Father of those who trust Christ as Savior.

Objective: That your students ask to become children of their heavenly Father through faith in Christ Jesus.

Materials:

Bibles

If we are Christians, we can grow closer to God as our Father if we only reach out and seek Him in the ways we've just listed here.

Is God *your* heavenly Father? As we talked about during the Bible study, in one sense, everyone is a child of God because God is his or her Creator. But not everyone has an essential, close, growing, child-parent relationship with the heavenly Father. Maybe you don't have this kind of relationship with God, but want to. Here is what you need to do. Admit to God that you have sinned against Him—that there is a wall of separation between you and Him because of your sin. Then ask Him to save you through His Son, Jesus Christ, no matter what it is you have done. Receive Christ into your life by faith.

If you need more assistance leading students to Christ, you will find some helps inside the back cover of this teacher's commentary.

Close the class in prayer, acknowledging the fatherhood of God over all believers. Pray for those students who want to have a relationship with God as their heavenly Father through Jesus Christ. Let your students know that you are available to talk with them about their decision to follow Christ.