

BRIEFING #7

THE FATHER WOUND



The tanned face flushes. Then the soldier wheels abruptly and storms across the yard, plunging into the basement. For the rest of my life I will hear the screen door's sharp bang and the last thing he said before he turned his back and walked away. 'No son of mine is a coward.'



Tom Mathews, in his profoundly moving book, *Our Fathers' War*, tells the story of his first memory of his father on a hot August day in 1945, a meeting forever branded into his brain. His father, a soldier in the 10th Mountain Division, was home from the war, having survived the brutal but forgotten front line that was Italy. Still in uniform, Tom Mathews Sr seems like a giant to the nearly two-year-old Tom Jr, seated atop the relative security of the doghouse, studying the approaching stranger. Marching up to the doghouse, his father opens up his arms, ordering his son to jump. Frozen by the moment, by the supposedly vast distance that separates them, Tom Jr recoils and refuses to budge. "It's okay, Tommy," Tom Sr makes one more attempt, "I'm your father." Tom Jr stays put. The father's tanned face flushes as he angrily marches off, cursing his son as a coward. And thus one war ends, and on the home front, another begins.

Father and son spend the rest of their lives at odds, a life until the very end spent in something like combat. The father raises his son via the four basic rules of manhood: don't cry, don't bitch, don't bother me when I'm busy, and never ever malingering (pretend to be sick). Meanwhile Tom Sr proceeds to sabotage his life, his wife, and his son with his restless anger, alcoholism, adultery, lies, divorce, and outright abandonment. The son, predictably, grows up hating his father and naturally ends up repeating nearly all of his father's sins. It is only at the very end of the book, after the damage is long done, that father and son take a trip to Italy to tour historical (and personal) battle lines. In revisiting the past, father and son finally find some forgiveness for each other, and a truce of sorts is declared—58 years after the end of WWII.

The power of a father's blessing is breathtaking; likewise the crushing weight of a fatherly curse. God the Father has invested earthly fathers with undeniably awesome authority. We are all under this patriarchal authority, and like Tom Mathews, you can ignore it, kick against the goad, or in the end embrace it, but you can no more escape a father's influence than you can escape gravity. *You must come to terms with the fact that, for better or worse, you are your father's child...*

The Universal Generational Wound

This and the subsequent two chapters on fatherhood are a direct continuation of the preceding chapters on generational wounds and strengths. Your father, obviously, represents the generation preceding your own, so all the truths you learned in the previous chapters apply. Given the immediate connection with your father, however, everything received from your father, good *and* bad, is that much more impactful. The father wound is the universal generational wound because every human being is born at war with both their earthly father *and* their heavenly Father. Even before birth we are prodigal sons and daughters, separated from the God who is *set apart* (holy), the All-Consuming Fire, the Ancient of Days, who lives in unapproachable light. We could no more jump into His arms than Tommy Jr could jump into the arms of a perfect stranger. This heavenly Father wound makes it all the more amazing that God the *Father* sent His only *Son* to negotiate a peace between the warring parties, a bloody cessation of hostilities dearly bought. The peace has been paid for, but many have failed to implement its terms. The fallen





**THE POWER OF
A FATHER'S
BLESSING IS
BREATHTAKING...**

.....

**...LIKEWISE
THE CRUSHING
WEIGHT OF A
FATHERLY CURSE.**



are still fighting it out across the fields of Genesis; the broken relationship between God and Adam is still breaking apart fathers and their children to this day...

We are a nation of children at war with our Father/fathers. You can read about American Adams and Cains, and for that matter, Abels, every day in our newspapers. In America today the father wound is the universal wound. *The United States leads the world in fatherlessness.* We are paying a steep price for generations of fatherly abuse, domestic violence, sexual perversion, alcohol and drug addiction, PTSD, materialism, workaholism, idolatry, godlessness, and spiritual apathy. Decades of sex before marriage, shacking up, and divorce have created millions of single moms, because sexually addicted men only think with their dicks. In our wisdom we are now adding homosexual parents, surrogate parents, sperm donors, and transsexuals to the absolute mess we have made of marriage and family. Millions of men have time and again chosen career and money over their own flesh and blood, abandoning their children at the altar of mammon. Millions of addicted and violent fathers have abused and even murdered their own kin creating a nation where it is safer for a woman to walk the streets at night than to go home to her loved ones. 1 out of every 100 Americans is now in jail; the vast majority of these inmates are fatherless men.

The war with our fathers is reflected in our movies and television shows. Luke Skywalker's father is an evil monster. In the latest *Star Trek* reboot, Captain Kirk's father dies within the opening minutes of the movie, another absentee father lost in space. *The Terminator* features yet another absentee father in need of rescue and a murdering machine who winds up filling in as a protective father figure. Study the popular *Lost* television series, and you will discover that nearly every character portrayed has a massive father wound; their fathers are abusive, manipulative, alcoholic, imprisoned, violent or dead. Television today is all about the *Lost* children of lost fathers who can't even imagine that *Father Knows Best*; fathers today are depicted as sexually addicted idiots, good enough only for a punch line. What is it they say about writers, screenwriters or otherwise: *write what you know*? And if all fathers are abusive, addicted idiots, why would anyone in their right mind want anything to do with the heavenly Father? Our fictions merely reveal our very factual wounds.

This is a war we cannot win. We are free to ignore and disobey our Father/fathers, but we pay a terrible price for our wounded rebellion. Remember, God the Father cannot be mocked; we His children inevitably reap what we sow. You don't break God's laws; God's laws break you, and inevitably, your children break right alongside you. Broken children almost invariably become broken fathers and mothers producing even more broken children...

We are an orphaned generation of fatherless children, a nation of people still trying to get picked for the team. You remember the drill: All the neighborhood kids have gathered for an impromptu game, and you're just hoping you aren't the last kid picked. Fatherless people are like the kid always picked last, except in this case it's much worse, a wound that can last all your life, *because your own father didn't pick you.* It doesn't matter why—work, alcohol, drugs, abuse, absence, and even death—the gut-punching message is loud and clear: Your own father, your *dad* for crying out loud, couldn't be bothered to spend time with his own flesh and blood. It's actually a one-two gut punch, because there is another message in your father's indifference. The logical implication is clear: If your earthly father didn't pick you, why on earth would your heavenly Father pick you? And how can you ever believe in the Father you can't see if you never saw the only father you could? I know all the theology behind the fact that God the Father makes up for this by "picking" us for His team, but honestly sometimes that doesn't mean much when we can't see God, hear Him audibly, or touch Him. Sometimes I think even God can't make up for the daddy-sized hole in a person's heart.

Surgeon General's Warning: Fathers May Be Damaging to Your Health!

The father wound is a universal wound, but notice that it is specific to fathers. No one ever talks about the *mother wound* or America's vast problem with *motherlessness*. Obviously there are exceptions to the rule, but in general mothers are doing what God designed them to do. Fathers, on the other hand...

At the risk of oversimplification, allow me to describe what I believe are the three most common types of dysfunctional fathers. Your father wounds will vary depending on your particular type of father:

Abusive Fathers (Addicted, Angry, Controlling, and/or Perfectionistic)

The older generations—you know who you are—were often raised by fathers who were *physically present but emotionally and spiritually absent*. Even worse they were *physically present and physically and spiritually abusive*. Many fathers today have followed in their footsteps. These include a host of angry fathers who are physically, verbally, and even sexually abusive, fathers who are often addicts and were themselves abused as children. Controlling fathers are often found in the military and in legalistic and fundamentalist churches; they tend to bury their anger and pain internally, so they aren't physically abusive, but their torment leaks out anyway in the form of regimentation and constant demands. Remember Tom Sr's rules: Don't cry, don't bitch, don't bother, and always get the job done no matter how much suffering is required! Those of you raised by perfectionistic fathers learn quickly that you have to perform to earn your father's love, that enough is never good enough. Perfectionistic fathers are abusive because they create impossible expectations and set unachievable standards but have little if any ability to create a home where such goals become reality. The angry, controlling, and perfectionistic father types understand the need for discipline, for correction, for fear and respect of authority, and for endurance during hard times, but in abusing their God-given authority and power, they create children who invariably live at the opposite end of the spectrum. Abusive fathers typically have no conception of how to bless and believe in their children, much less communicate their love and pride. Laying down the law without the context of a loving relationship inevitably leads to rebellion and the creation of even more children who grow up to become abusive fathers. Those of you who have suffered under a father's abuse of authority and power are naturally fearful and suspicious of anyone preaching about rules, discipline, and submission to authority. Simply put, for you *correction represents rejection, and expectation equals frustration*...



Absent Fathers

In one sense this is the easiest of the dysfunctional father types to define. Your father just wasn't there, and thus, by his absence, neither *physically, emotionally, nor spiritually present*. He died when you were young, he ran away with the secretary, your parents divorced and your dad drifted away, you were adopted—whatever the reason, your dad never picked you for his team because there was no team. For you all this talk about fathers seems irrelevant. Your mom did the best she could; you've gotten along more or less fine without a dad. Why change now? Your father wasn't around to beat you, bitch at you, or believe in you, so you just survive. Or you don't and end up in that home away from all homes, prison. You may hate your father's guts, never give him a second thought, or simply shrug your shoulders, but either way you are a *fatherless child defined by absence*. This is precisely what makes this kind of father wound so challenging. At least Tom Jr received some rules; he at least had a father to rebel against. Fatherless children on the other hand don't even know where to begin. How can you miss someone so much when you don't even know who it is you're missing? Without even a father to run away from, you remain forever the prodigal son trapped in an orphan's limbo. Simply put, *absence doesn't make the heart grow fonder when all you grow up with are unknowns and what-ifs*.



Average Fathers

You may be surprised that I mention *average* fathers in a list of dysfunctional father types. Remember that *sin* isn't just doing evil; it's also blanking on the good you're supposed to do. There are many fathers out there who get it half way right. See if this describes your dad: He was physically present, loved your mother, disciplined you fairly, took you on adventures, attended your games when he could, and even taught you a thing or two about life. You probably



followed in his footsteps, attending church, raising a family, finding success in a career or ministry. You don't fear correction and value discipline; you know that your father loved you even though he never said it. Any of that sound familiar? This kind of father didn't harm you, he covered the basics of fatherhood, but he still missed it big time because there is so much more to fatherhood than just showing up. Average dads are *physically present but often emotionally and spiritually passive*. There are many "decent" dads in church today; this is proven by the fact that up to as many as 80 percent of children in church now will grow up to leave it. In my judgment this is an even greater sin than abusing your own child. This the ultimate absence of the right, the failure of a father to pass on to his children a vitally alive relationship with the most *alive* Person alive today! Passive fathers raise children indifferent to God and thus headed straight for hell! Decent dads have, well, a *decent* relationship with God; they know God intellectually, they believe all the right things and go to church, but it's largely head knowledge without the power of an intimate, breathing bond. The devil also believes in God, but that doesn't remotely mean they are on speaking terms. Adolescents better than anyone can sense hypocrisy a mile away; their abandonment of the American church speaks volumes about the passive faith of their fathers.

If you are the child of an average, passive father, you can grow up even more confused than a child with no father at all. You had a dad, a pretty decent dad compared to the horror stories you've heard about other fathers, so what right do you have to complain? Average dads relate to their children as they relate to God—it's all head knowledge. They are physically present, but their soul are far away; there is no intimacy in their hugs (if you get any at all). This is why decent dads can't tell you that they love you; they have no idea how to bless you because that presupposes discovering the deep places of your heart, and that requires vulnerability and risk. You don't know what you didn't get from your decent dad; you just know you didn't get it. Again, it's the difficulty of dealing with a father wound defined by absence. How can you know what you have missed if you never experienced it? Godly fathers don't just do the basics—they help their children discover their *pre-destiny*, the calling and dream that God has placed in every person's heart long before they were born. Godly fathers are always pregnant with their children's potential possibilities; they know how, via belief and blessing, to facilitate the release of dreams that turn into reality. In my experience very few fathers get this incredibly important part of fatherhood right. Simply put, the *passive absence of evil does not remotely guarantee the presence of the greatest good*.



Why Bother with Your Father?

If the father wound is such a universal wound and if there are so many dysfunctional fathers out there, maybe we should just junk the whole concept. Maybe dads are irrelevant, passé? Or maybe fatherhood is so important the devil has unleashed his full fury upon as many fathers as he can. I can think of only one area that the devil has savaged as greatly as he has fatherhood in the last 50 years, and that is sexuality. One way to determine the strategic importance of something is by judging how much attention is paid to it by your enemy...

The reality is, the importance of Fatherhood simply cannot be overstated. Here's why:

Innate Authority.

First of all, Fatherhood is important because God made it important. God can do whatever He wants; He is God! The divine endowment of innate fatherly authority by definition makes Fatherhood essential. When God delegates power to a person or position, He doesn't take it back simply because that power is unused or used for evil. Adam is the most obvious negative example of this investment of divine authority. God, of course, knew that Adam's decisions would change the entire course of human history; nonetheless God did not revoke Adamic authority. Each earthly father is like a mini-Adam; each has been given the power and authority to impact their bloodline, for good or evil, for centuries to come. The distribution of divine authority has nothing to do with fairness, or equality of the sexes, or ever-changing cultural norms, but is simply a matter of divine choice and endowment. Remember God never reveals Himself as the *Heavenly Mother*; this is not in any way denigrate motherhood or deny that God perfectly embodies all feminine qualities (in His image, man and woman were made), but simply to emphasize the uniqueness of Fatherhood. The sun is hot and yellowish orange; fathers have a massive impact on their children's lives. Simply put, this is the divine design for Fatherhood. Deal with it!

The Defining Relationship.

Fatherhood is important because only a little child can enter the kingdom of heaven; you must come to the Father as His child. Created in our Father's image, we are defined by the Parent/child relationship because God Himself is defined by His relationship with His only begotten Son. By definition, there is *no* other way to know the Father than through His Son. *No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also* (1 John 2:23, ESV). Even Jesus comes to His Father as a child; even Jesus, whose Name is above all names, submits to Father. Jesus said: *The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing* (John 5:19). Jesus is *the Son*; to know Him is to know Him in the context of *His Father*. The deepest levels of relationship with God are saved for those who would know God the Father, *Him who is from the beginning*. It all goes back to the beginning, to Genesis: *The reason the Father sent the Son was to restore the lost relationship with His little children. You are your Father's child!*

Generational Context.

Fatherhood is all about your context. For some of you, this will be the most painful lesson in the book because it will be the first time you have given your father wound some serious thought. In seminary they spend countless hours teaching you how to interpret Scripture properly in its original context (Hebrew and Greek anyone?), but they offer zero classes on healing your father wound. How can you correctly interpret Scripture if you can't even correctly interpret yourself! Who are you? Who came before you? Why do you do what you do? What is *your* context! The father wound packs such a universal punch precisely because it isn't just your father punching you so to speak; it's all your grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather's stuff rolled into your father's history that lands such a haymaker on the heart. *You are a product of your past; your past was your father's future. You are your father's son or daughter; coming to terms with your generational context is vital to healing your father wound.*

Fatherly Reproduction.

Finally, Fatherhood is important because fathers, by definition, will reproduce themselves. In case you haven't noticed, fathers make more fathers, and the default trend is degeneration. This is as obvious today as it was in the time of Adam who fathered a people so corrupt God drowned all of them save for Noah and his family. *Fatherless people*, if they remain as such, reaping what their fathers have or haven't sown, inevitably give birth to *faithless people*. Spiritually fatherless fathers create spiritual and physical bastards. Today being a *bastard* has lost its stigma, but in the olden days having an illegitimate child, a child born out of *wedlock*, was a terrible reproach. America's modern generations in particular are preeminently the *Illegitimate Generations*. The invariable result of debased fathers siring ever-increasingly debauched children is the complete spiritual and often physical collapse of an entire nation. Like a copy of a copy of a copy, such nations eventually produce children who cannot sustain the most basic tasks required of any functioning society. A work ethic, basic honesty and morality, ability to manage money, Republican and Democratic politicians who can get along well enough to actually govern the country...



You are a product of your past; your
past was your father's future.

**YOU ARE YOUR
FATHER'S CHILD.**

In America, we are *faithless*, not *faithful*. Oh, we claim to believe in God, but our collective actions speak much louder than words. Americans today cannot commit to anything—marriage, our own children, a church, a job, a savings account, a political stand—we shift constantly like the wind. The latest fad, the latest trend, the latest pleasure is merely a constant and futile searching for the legitimacy most Americans have never experienced. We deeply long to belong to someone, to something, and yet we are deeply suspicious of the very thing we ache for. We crave security, but can never find it, because we refuse to submit to the order and rules required to ensure security—the *wedlock*, for example, of a *wedding*. We don't believe in anyone because we trust no one, not even ourselves, and rightly so. No one—preachers, teachers, politicians, employers, and especially fathers—no one keeps their word anymore. And thus *We the (Fatherless) People* swim only in the shallow kiddie pool of life; stuck in the permanent, televised quicksand of an addicted adolescence, we only shack up and jack off and log in and log off and tweet and text and go viral, because our spiritual attention span lasts as long as the latest YouTube video sensation.

At the twilight end of every civilization, the only thing that remains is the ceaseless pursuit of distraction via entertainment. Think the blood-drenched spectacles of the Roman Colosseum. The American Illegitimate Generation lives and moves and has its being via multimedia—every pornographic perversion possible on YouTube, every video game attack by another alien monstrosity, and the end of the world yet again in flawless 3-D HD CGI. They have seen it all before. Like the children of prostitutes, the fatherless children of fatherless children, they have no words left to describe the burned-out place beyond cynicism and despair, and all that is left is escape into violence and sex...

THE FATHER'S HAND =
JUDGMENT

THE FATHER'S HEART =
LOVE

Father Wounds = Wounded Beliefs About Father

Tear yourself away from your TV, computer, laptop, iPad, cell phone, and video games for a moment and consider this: Given that so much is riding on our dads, if Fatherhood is the lens through which we all look at God the Father, then we've got a major problem on our hands. How can we ever come to God the Father if the way is blocked by our earthly fathers? How can we learn something we have only known by its absence and abuse? How do we heal our father wounds?

As usual, I recommend we get back to the Bible. Our fathers may have been complete screwups, control freaks, or decently average, but God the Father has always been and always will be the perfect Father. In other words, don't study the copy of a copy of a copy—look at the genuine, the one and only, the original Dad. Scripture tells us everything we need to know about Fatherhood, starting with this first fundamental fact, a seemingly impossible contradiction: God the Father is Someone we should both fear and love above all others. God is far and away the most dangerous being in the universe and no one could possibly love us more! Combine *the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge* (Proverbs 1:7) with *God so loved the world* (John 3:16), and you suddenly have a new understanding why it is so hard to find healthy fathers.

Let's pause for a moment and enjoy yet another Biblical paradox. Jesus commands us to fear His Father, He who can destroy both body and soul, the All-Consuming Fire, even while Jesus Himself embodies, literally, the Father's love for us. God the Father is the most gracious person in the universe! Dangerous and gracious? Fear and love the same person? I can hear your mental gears grinding. To put it simply, if you truly wish to know the Heavenly Father and in turn become a healthy father yourself, *you must learn to seek both the Father's Hand and the Father's Heart*. The Father's Hand represents God's laws, teaching, testing, discipline, and judgment, while the Father's Heart represents His love, adoption, belief, blessing, and reward. Only together, Hand *and* Heart, do they fully embody the divine reality of our Heavenly Father.

Many people initially come to God because His love and grace truly are amazing. Everyone likes the part about *God so loving the world*. And rightly so—does anyone have a bigger heart than God the Father? Mainline churches preach a Father who is all mercy and compassion, a God who is all Heart. But it isn't just the liberals; many Evangelicals seek only God's unconditional love. After all, mercy triumphs over judgment, and God wants all people saved, and we should be respectful and tolerant of all religions, and a loving God wouldn't really send people to hell, would He? Any of this sound familiar to you?

Maybe you grew up on the other side of the great divide. There are many legalistic and fundamentalist churches that preach only fire and brimstone. They emphasize the dangers of God's judgment, the importance of keeping His rules, and the reality

of the fires of hell and rightly so—is there anyone scarier than God the Father? This is the God of the Old Testament and the God of Revelation, a God who holds the white-hot fury of His wrath in His holy hands. It is, after all, called *Judgment Day*, not *Happy-Everybody-Ends-Up-in-Heaven-Somehow-Tolerance Day!*

Who is God the Father to you? In which camp do you find yourself? The Hand or the Heart? Depending on your father wounds, you will tend to either fear God, avoid God, or turn God into the Giant Teddy Bear/ATM Machine in the Sky. Your father wounds will wound your views about God. Who is God the Father to you? Go ask your dad...

The Abusive God: Afraid and Angry.

Remember, I am speaking in generalities. If your dad was abusive, you are likely to be both afraid of God's Hand and angry at His Heart. If God really loved you, how could He let such horrible things happen to you? Where the hell, for example, was God when you were getting raped every day by your older brother? And if God is a judge who disciplines and punishes people, why, that's just hateful, bigoted condemnation, and you've had enough of that to last you a lifetime. If you come to God at all, you can only imagine a God who is all Heart, a giant teddy bear who wouldn't hurt a fly. If your father was controlling and demanding, well, the last thing you could want would be a religion with lots of rules and requirements. For you it's all about tolerance and respect and whatever feels right, because all roads lead to God. A perfectionistic father? Please. If you couldn't live up to your dad's impossible standards, how could you possibly please Someone who really is *perfect*? Children of abusive fathers will believe in a god who is unconditionally safe; they create a god in their own image, the opposite image from their fathers. God, if He really loves you, has to meet you on your terms. A god fashioned in your image and defined by your terms, however, is no God at all. This is idolatry, pure and simple.



Ironically, people who are afraid of and angry at God are not exclusive to the grace-and-mercy-only camp. Abused people often find their way into legalistic and fundamentalist groups, because you better keep dad/Dad happy or else! Who in their right mind wants to go to hell? God is the All-Powerful Judge, therefore you better keep all of His rules; in fact, let's invent some new ones just to err on the side of caution. The demanding, controlling, perfectionistic nature of rule-based religion can feel quite safe, in a twisted way, to someone raised by this kind of father. These kinds of people in turn can easily become abusive leaders of others, especially since performance-based faith is an exhausting treadmill that requires constant effort. The Pharisees of Jesus' day were the classic example of this kind of legalism. In this case the rules, the laws themselves, become your god, so that ultimately, like the Pharisees, you choose the law over the Lawgiver. Again, this is idolatry, pure and simple.

The Absent God: Avoidant and Alone.

People, men especially, who grow up without a dad, usually don't go to church. Why bother? God is irrelevant and unnecessary. Anyone in ministry has seen this scenario played out hundreds of times: The single mom can take her boys to church, but if there is no dad, the odds of those boys remaining in church when they grow up are slim to none. Conversely, if you can change the father, the entire family changes. Children can bond with their single mothers, but there is simply no replacement for a father, especially during adolescence. Fatherless people, even if surrounded by their own spouses and kids, remain spiritually and emotionally alone and apart. They cannot achieve intimacy. For one, they had no role models. And for two, without a dad to bond with during adolescence they are normally left stuck in a permanent adult adolescence. Fatherless women almost invariably seek out men like their fathers; again, it's a twisted, subconscious logic: You are safer with what you know than what you don't. Male or female, if you are the child of an absentee father, then it's all about your five senses, things you can see and feel: money, your job, your next girlfriend or boyfriend, sex, drugs, toys (got your Harley Davidson?), and anything or anyone who can bring you relief from your internal abandonment. The Father's Hand and Heart? Who cares? You are too busy surviving and chasing down your next high.



The Average God: Achingly Average.

Average dads often produce decent, upstanding citizens who are lousy Christians, believers who have a form of godliness but no power and passion. They often grow up to become practicing Deists (like many of our forefathers who believed that God created creation like a wonderful, giant clock so He could leave and let things run on their own). America is full of deistic Christians. You believe in God, you go to church occasionally, you don't really read the Bible, but you have the Bible app on your phone. Come on, be honest. You get a lot more excited about your sports teams than God and church! Have you even once in your life jumped up and down with excitement over something God did? Your god is really your job, and God is just a life insurance policy in the sky. Your kids spend 2 hours in church every Sunday, unless they have a game, and 35 hours each week in public schools raised by wolves and pagans, because that's what everybody else does. Since when did God give you permission to let someone else raise up your own kids in the way they should go? You have a mortgage, a car loan, and lots of credit card debt, because God takes care of those who take care of themselves, right? Don't rock the boat, keep the faith, cross your fingers, and maybe you can retire at 60 and play golf in Arizona. There is no fire, no suffering, no persecution. You are so bland and blasé that Jesus long ago spit you out of His mouth, but you are too lukewarm to realize it. You got the vaccine but not the disease; you had the wedding but never go on the honeymoon. You don't fear His Hand because you're too polite to bother His Heart. There is so much more to the Christian walk than a decently average, all-American relationship with a decently average, imaginary, all-American god...



Any of this ringing any bells? Remember what I said about generalities. You may relate to different aspects of each father wound and each wounded view of the father but not relate to others. I myself can relate in some sense to all of them. My father was in many ways absent during key periods of my life, but I was abused by my grandfather, so I grew up afraid and angry. Honestly, I think I mentally checked out of my family around age 13 and physically left home (left the country, in fact) when I was 17. All of this has seriously colored my view of God and my relationship with Him as my Father. I am still trying to figure it all out—that's partially why I am writing this book.

My Dad and Me (The Davis Context)



MY FATHER, DARRYL DAVIS

You didn't think we would keep this all impersonal and abstract, did you? As ever, allow me to lead by example. I need to give you some basic family context so you can understand some of the issues I mention in the homework. These chapters on Fatherhood are deeply personal for me, and frankly, an area of woundedness I am not at all excited to share with the world. I have to talk what I teach, however, and practice what I preach. How can I expect you to do what I haven't done myself? And yes, I did get my father's permission to publish the material in these chapters.

My father, Darryl Davis, is the youngest son of Donald Davis (now deceased). Growing up in Portland, Oregon, my father essentially raised himself on the city streets while his father lurches from one business or job to another. I have already discussed Grandpa Don's pedophilic behavior and the curses that destroyed his father and family, but obviously, being raised by such a man had a major impact on my father as well. Introverted by nature, my father became a bookworm who nonetheless failed at school. A typical, somewhat spoiled youngest child, Darryl would have remained another lost, nominally Christian young man save for the intervention of a man named Bob Carlson. Bob reached out to my dad, mentored and disciplined him, and literally changed the entire course of his life (not to mention mine). The Davis family has been discipling people ever since then, and may my children and their descendants continue in obedience to Jesus' command long after I am gone!

As my father matured spiritually, he also began to take academics more seriously, eventually graduating with a master's degree (a first as far as I know in the Davis family line), so he could become a teacher. He married my mother, a nurse, and started a family, adding myself, my sister, and my adopted brother to the mix. Both of my parents knew early on that they wanted to be missionaries, so they spent two years in Guam as a test to see how they would handle living in a different environment. Guam led to another island, Roatan, Honduras, and their appointment as Conservative Baptist missionaries.

My father successfully launched a Christian English-speaking high school and elementary school on the island. After 5 years, he transitioned to the mainland to serve as the 2nd in-command of a Conservative Baptist church-planting movement that eventually resulted in a 100-plus small-sized churches, a movement still growing and in operation today, now run completely by Hondurans. After a total of 13 years in Honduras, my father and mother were sent to the jungles of NYC, where my father taught basic pastoral courses to lay leaders from a wide variety of ethnic groups. After 9 years in the Big Apple, my mother was ready to return to Oregon, where they retired. They now lead a quiet life across the river in Vancouver, Washington, although, as ever, they are still active in helping and discipling people.

My father and I have opposite personalities. He's an introvert, I am an extrovert. He is a phlegmatic who is 98 percent of the time the same emotionally, Spock to my Captain Kirk. He has always gotten up early (4 or 5 a.m.) to have his devotions and to journal, while my ideal morning is to wake up at about 9 a.m. He loves living in a big city; I am happiest on a beach or out in the country. He likes Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*; I like *Die Hard* and *Predator*. He usually votes Democrat (I know, I'm still praying for his salvation), I vote Republican because I despise all abortionists. I am blunt, forceful, and verbal; he is unaggressive and peaceful and prefers to write me letters. Thankfully, I inherited his sense of humor, his gift for writing, his love of reading and history, and his passion for discipling people. Of course, he still can't believe I own guns, but when the zombies take over, he's planning on living in my house...

As I think of my relationship with my father, and its shortcomings, I must also state for the record that I would have been a difficult son for any father to father. I was a strange mixture of confidence and pain and abuse and addiction and brilliance and stubbornness

and selfishness and love of God, for a long time as changeable as the sea, moody and quasi-multiple personality. Sometimes I think of my former life as a constant effort at return from internal exile, from dissociative and addictive la-la land. Trust me, it's a bizarre way to spend a life haunted by trauma you can't even remember. I keep a stack of books by my bedside, stories that deeply impacted me when I was young, years before I knew of any trauma in my past. I deeply identified with these stories, even though I didn't know why at the time. *The Snow Queen* was a fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen about a young boy cursed and kidnapped by a witch. *The Forgotten Door* was about a boy from another planet who had fallen into our world; he was being hunted by sinister authority figures. *Tim in Danger* and *Deathman, Do Not Follow Me...* well, the titles speak for themselves. As I wrote in a poem, these stories were like clues that I had left for myself at the scene of the crime, *at the scene of myself*. The first story I ever wrote, way back in college, was about this half-asleep man waking from a forever dream, trudging through a Hades-like world until he suddenly comes face to face with someone crucified to a tree. To his horror he realizes that he is surrounded by trees bearing the crucified bodies of living human beings, children included. I tried ending the story with a positive, theologically correct ending, but I could never finish it. Nor did I pause then to reflect on why I would write such a depressing, disturbing, and morbid piece.

All this to say that even with all my training and experience in counseling I would have had a difficult time parenting a child who survived sexual and ritual abuse. My father, raised by a father with no soul, didn't stand much of a chance. Thus I have tried to remember this in my writing, trying to be realistic in my expectations of him, while still having the courage to wear my heart and my emotions on my sleeve.

But now it's your turn to get personal...



**ST. SCREWUP
FATHERS WILL
PRODUCE ST.
SCREWUP CHILDREN
UNLESS SOMEONE
CHANGES THE
GENERATIONAL
PATTERN.
BOB CARLSON
MENTORED AND
DISCIPLED MY
FATHER AND HELPED
TURN HIM INTO A
ST. STEADFAST.
AND UTTERLY
CHANGED MY LIFE.**

SPECIAL OPS! HOMEWORK: LET'S GET PRACTICAL



Maturity Action Steps: Identifying Your Father Wounds

I. Your Life in a Paragraph

Write out a brief summary of your life—essentially the major places, events, experiences, and choices of your life, both good and bad. Think of people who changed your life. Important churches, books, times of spiritual breakthroughs. Family. Seasons of change. Education. Career. Failures. Successes. Major wounds or crisis. Major sins. Family milestones, etc. Here's my sample summary for you to use as a guide. (I laid it out horizontally to save space.)

Early Childhood. Guam. Portland and Sexual/Ritual abuse (repressed). Roatan. Salvation. 6th grade, Portland. Bethlehem Baptist. Early Adolescence. La Ceiba/Mazapan in Honduras (my school). High School at the Stony Brook School back in the States. Porn Addiction. Article on sexual addiction. Wheaton College/Macaluso. Guatemala. Joye and Marriage. First Job/SSA. Demons. Denver Seminary/Church Planting. Victory Over the Darkness/Generational Sin. The Bambinos, Luke and Rebekah. Portland/Failure and Heartbreak in the Wilderness. Dominos Pizza and Grandpa's Abuse (Flashbacks). House Church. Purity and the Holy Spirit. Homeschooling Kids. Ritual Abuse and Nightmares. Associate Pastor/Wilderness. Western Seminary/Counseling. Writing First Book. Maturity/Family. Addictions Counseling. Purity and Pureheart. The Promised Land? More Maturity/Consistency/Authority. Success. More Books. Ministry Expanding. Family/Kids in College...

II. Your Father's Impact (Good and Bad)

Now write a brief summary of how your father impacted (or didn't) each major segment of your life. Consider each period, what your father did right, what your father got wrong, and specifically if your father was **1) Abusive (addicted, angry, controlling, and/or perfectionistic), 2) Absent, and/or 3) Average (Passive)**. Use these terms to help categorize your father's impact on you, or lack thereof. (Again, I have included my summary as a guide, summarized to save space.)



Childhood

Essentially no memories before age 7 (repressed trauma), but my childhood pictures (before age 4) show me as a happy and confident child. Always felt secure in my parents unconditional love, though my father never told me that he loved me. Also don't remember any memorable physical display of affection or love from my dad. Failed to protect me from my grandfather and ritual abuse, though back then no one ever talked about that kind of thing. He did take us (age 7) to Honduras, taking me away from my abusers, and thus I was able to experience a somewhat normal childhood and all the wonders of growing up on a Caribbean island. Very positive memories of my dad reading stories to us, taking me on great outings and adventures, buying me records (which started my lifelong love of music). My dad also taught me about God, took me to the Baptist church (which was mostly dead), which led to my accepting Christ at age 7, and he modeled the Christian walk for me. My time on the island is still probably the happiest 5 years of my life. My dad also took me to Bethlehem Baptist (back in the States), which as a Charismatic church introduced me to the reality of the Holy Spirit and undoubtedly kept me from turning my back on God. I don't know why my father attended this church, since he has never been Charismatic, but it sure made a huge difference in my life.

Adolescence

Absent or *Passive* would probably be the words I'd pick to describe my father during my teen years. My major love language is physical touch; I remember essentially zero from my father during these years. Started with our return to the States for the year. Lost all my friends and home on the island and went to public school (6th grade) in America. (I didn't even know who the Beatles were!) Terrible nightmares at night, saw demons, etc., that I now realize was all the ritual abuse crap coming back upon my return to Portland. I remember no comfort from my father, nor did I ever share with him what was going on. (I didn't have any way to articulate my pain and loneliness.) Nor did I tell him about my sexual addiction. He had tried once to teach me about sex with some James Dobson tapes, but it was too little and too late. This was a terrible year when I really needed my father, but he was off raising support to continue in missions. I was all alone, without friends, staying in a stranger's house, nightmares at night, I didn't fit in, and basically I just escaped as often as I could into American television, music, and books.

Next 4 years back in Honduras, but now on mainland, new language, new culture, new school, but same old absence. My dad was very busy with his mission work. I was still lonely, still in pain, and even more sexually addicted, lived in a secret, fantasy la-la land. Lots of fighting with my siblings, never fit in at school, though I did well in school. Dad tried to involve me in mission trips, but I didn't like the heat, bugs, poverty, so usually didn't go. Played soccer for school, did well, but don't remember my father ever coming to any of my games? Went to professional soccer games by myself. Dad tried to get us do family devotions, but it rarely ended well. Things he did right were the usual adventure trips (especially Copan, Xmas in Tegucigalpa, etc), strong marriage to my mother, handled conflict well, good communicator, but don't remember him ever telling me he loved me or was proud of me, never talked about the deep things of my soul, or who I was and what I wanted to be. Finally left Honduras and my family for good to finish my junior and senior years of high school in the US at the Stony Brook School on Long Island. In hindsight now think I realized instinctively that I had to go someplace else to get what I would never get from my father.

Stony Brook and Wheaton

My word for my dad during these years, with one major exception, would be *irrelevant*, though he at least let me leave home and go off to prep school in the States. Stony Brook changed the entire course of my life. Away from my family for year at a school where I didn't know a soul, and a year later I was asked to be Head Prefect (essentially the student body president). Varsity soccer, barbershop quartet, honor roll student, and big man on campus. Never experienced anything like this before. Loved and really appreciated by my teachers, and I really responded to this—like I was starved for affection. Chose to follow God now that I was away from my family, another turning point for me (and proof of the seeds my parents had planted in me). Also



received article from Hans Boice, by the sexually addicted pastor, that forever changed the course of my life. My dad wrote me letters (one of his love languages is writing) during this time, but writing is not my love language, and I rarely responded. Incident I remember most is the day I called my father all the way in Honduras (an international call was a big deal back then) to proudly announce my selection as Head Prefect of the Stony Brook School (the same school Billy Graham sent his kids to), and my father's first comment was "What's a prefect? Is that like a school janitor?" Epitomizes his utter inability to express any

pride in me or bless my leadership potential and calling in life. During college I was the typical driven overachiever, too busy and successful to worry about my parents and family. Adopted the Macalosos as my surrogate parents, again really responded to their unconditional love. Often spent even the summers away from my family, so I rarely even saw my father, much less interacted with him. One huge exception was his wise counsel (made up for his "janitor" comment) during my dating of Joye (my wife) when I had essentially a demonic panic attack and thought God was telling me to stop courting her. Dad told me to "relax," stop overthinking things, and just spend time with her and let God lead. 25 years later Joye is still the best thing to ever happen to me other than Jesus, so very timely counsel from my father!

Young Adulthood

Present but still *absent* in crucial areas would be my description of Dad in this next phase. By now my parents were back in the States so got to see them a little more often, but still seemed largely immaterial to my life, in part due to geographic distance. Think my parents always remembered me as their joyful, confident, outgoing firstborn; never saw my wounds and addictions. The failure of my father to help me figure who I was or what I was called to do, or to recognize or validate my gifts. Both parents strongly opposed me going to seminary. Too busy in seminary to spend much time with my dad. At the end of seminary moved from Colorado back to Oregon (where my parents were now living), ostensibly to plant a Hispanic church with my father. This plan fell apart, but it did get us back in Oregon and living in my parent's basement. In hindsight realize the Spirit was leading me back to Oregon to confront my past—had terrible murder nightmares even during the move back to Portland. Now physically near my father so spending regular time together—both my parents dearly loved Joye and our kids; in fact, I think one of the best things my parents ever did was invest serious amounts of love, time, money, and life experience in my two children. *Abuelos Fantasticos!* Enjoyed my father's company when we spent time together, but sadly for me the move back to Portland was the beginning of my wilderness experience and the hour of reckoning in finally coming to terms with my past.

The Nightmare Years

Again *Present/Absent*. Both my parents were very supportive of Joye and me as we struggled financially for many years while I lurched from Dominos pizza jobs to house church pastor to associate pastor, struggling to find my calling and still pay the bills. Lots of failure and heartbreak during this time. On the positive side, many fun and happy dinners/holidays together, again loved having my kids grow up with their grandparents. In some ways my dad was a lot better grandparent than he was a father. Thankfully nothing like his father! On the negative, got lots of counsel from my dad about working for living, but again he failed in helping me discover God's calling. Went through stages of breaking free of sexual addiction with no help from my father, and then flashbacks and dreams of Grandpa Don's abuse. Will always remember my father's utter inability to confront his own father about his behavior—imagine what I would have done if I had discovered that my father had foully abused my children (in my own home for crying out loud)! Beating him to a pulp would have been the minimum outcome. Still think my father is in denial about the abuse. The ritual abuse was even harder for him to deal with—both my parents are still in denial about this, although when dealing with something as bizarre and painful as ritual abuse, I think their denial is pretty understandable. It took me years to come to term with it myself, and it happened to me! But again, no ability whatsoever from my father to cry with me, hug me, comfort me, or stand up for me when he finally had the opportunity—and this during a time in my life when I needed it most! It's very painful for me to write these words, both for my own pain and the pain that I know it will cause my father and mother in reading it, but I also know that dealing with the pain is the only way out of the pit...

Middle Age and Maturity?

I am not sure whether there was more *presence* from my father during these years or I was finally just less needy. It only took me 40 years to confront my past and heal (for the most part) and figure out God's crazy plan for me. Now relating more to my father as an equal, enjoying his company, sense of humor, and same old stories. Both parents have gone through some very tough illness-related issues, my dad's experience being particularly brutal. Think this experience broke him in some ways, now tells me that he loves me and hugs me, although it always feels awkward (but I appreciate it nonetheless). Think I am at the stage where I don't really need my father's help or approval—I have had to make do without it in many ways most of my life, so it's too hard to change now. I think one of the great ironies of my father's life is that he has discipled so many men over the years (from different cultures), but he was never able to disciple or even mentor his own children (again, the result of his own father wounds). The Davis family remains to this day very fractured and in many ways dysfunctional; I essentially never spend time with my uncles, aunts, and cousins, and rarely even see my own siblings. I finally see the signs of old age in my father but even so in writing this, as initially painful as it may be, my hope is that we can fully heal our relationship, continue breaking the chains of ancestral curses and sins, and release blessing upon the Davis family and our descendants...

III. Your Father Wound

Now summarize your summary and list here your primary father wounds. (Again, my list is included for sake of comparison.)

While my father definitely did some major things right (for example, leading me to Christ, marriage to my mother, grandfather to my kids, etc.), I would have to conclude that my father has been primarily *absent* in my life, especially during the times when I needed him most.

- 1) Failure to protect me from my grandfather and ritual abusers. I don't blame him for the abuse. After all, who ever imagines such things happening to their children? But it still happened on his watch.
- 2) The absence of verbal expression of love and pride and the near-complete absence of physical touch, despite this being my primary love language.
- 3) The inability of my father to be a major source of comfort and counsel for me when I needed it most. No sense that I could ever really share the deep things of my soul with him.
- 4) The inability of my father to mentor me and help me discover God's calling and destiny for my life. Thanks to his father, my dad had little ability to teach me how to be a man (fix a car, handle my finances, act like a man, date a woman, etc.), much less how to dream and carry out this dream...

Pureheart Group Discussion Questions:

Share with your group a summary of your life story, and then share with the group the summary of your father wounds, explaining each wound and its cause in some detail.

Recommended Reading List and Resources:

- *Fathered by God* by John Eldredge. Many of you have already read *Wild at Heart*, but if you aren't familiar with Eldredge, I highly recommend anything he writes. Perhaps more than any other author in America in the last 20 years, he has wrestled with issues of manhood and fatherhood from a Christian perspective. Read his books! www.ransomedheart.com
- *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul* by John and Stasi Eldredge. If there is one book I would recommend for all women, this would be it. I think it is that important. This book will help you uncover your father wounds but also give you hope in the healing process.
- *Healing for the Father Wound* by H. Norman Wright. The author of more than 70 books, Dr. Wright has been a Christian counselor forever and is certainly well worth reading. This is one of the few books I know of that specifically focuses on the father wound in women. It is a must read for you ladies. Buy this book!
- *To Own a Dragon: Reflections on Growing Up Without a Father* and *Father Fiction: Chapters for a Fatherless Generation* by Donald Miller. Best known for his book, *Blue Like Jazz*, Miller grew up without a dad, so he knows firsthand the impact of the father wound. Highly recommended especially for those of you from the younger generations.
- *Bringing Up Boys* by Dr. James Dobson. Well known as founder of Focus on the Family, Dr. Dobson speaks to millions of Christians via his radio broadcasts, not to mention the many books and resources he has created over the years. While not about the father wound per se, this book covers many related issues particularly masculinity and the role of men in society
- *The Father You've Always Wanted* by Ed Tandy McGlasson. A former NFL lineman turned Vineyard pastor, Ed writes candidly about his own father wounds and failings as a father even as God leads him to start a seminar and conference ministry for healing father wounds. See www.edtandymcglasson.org for more information about his conferences.