Week Four: Gentle Father by Carlos Flores (Norridge) & Bianca Sanchez (Cicero)

* FOR WORSHIP Suggestion:
	+ “Run to the Father” - Cody Carnes
	+ “How He Loves” - David Crowder Band
	+ “Reckless Love” - Cory Asbury
	+ **Not to sing**, but you can put the students on to the song “Abba” - Ryan Ofei (Feat. Ahjah), it is a vibe.

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| Title | Gentle Father |
| What are we trying to get through? (Main Ideas) | The comfort of calling God Almighty, “Abba, Father.” 1. The intimate relationship He calls us to.
2. God’s compassion for His children.
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| Intro: Verses | This is for all students. We may be talking to students with present/decent fathers, absent fathers, or even very flawed fathers. No matter the case, the reality is they are imperfect. They all make mistakes, but there is One Father who simply just does not make mistakes and whose love is shown through generations. Today we will be looking at a lot of Scriptures, but this will help us see the Lord as Father. Main Scripture: Psalm 103: 1-19 * Introduce the key verse: **Psalm 103:13 “**As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.” (V. 13 - “father” “Compassion”)
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| Verses explained. * Definitions
* Basic, In-Text Q/A
* Quotes from commentators
 | What is compassion, what does it mean? (Quick question)* It is not empathy. Empathy is feeling concern and care for something, but just not really doing anything based on those emotions.
* Compassion often produces action to alleviate the suffering.
* Definition: “Compassion, a form of love, is aroused within us when we are confronted with those who suffer or are vulnerable.”

READ PSALM 103: 1-19 (Leaders: If you want, you can read the verses twice. The first you can ask the students to close their eyes and the second with their eyes opened. - Just a suggestion)Looking at Psalm 103, we see King David mention God showing compassion to those who fear Him as a father would show compassion to his children, in verse 13. Before that verse, David states a few other things about God. (Leaders - You can ask the students if any other characteristics stood out to them and to just shout them out)* Forgiving -Just
* Healing -Slow to Anger
* Redeeming -Compassionate
* Satisfying
* **Abundantly** Loving
* Merciful

These are all things that we could agree we would want from an earthly father, right? David also states that God does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repays us according to our iniquities. * He goes as far as blotting out all our transgression as far as the east is from the west.

I don’t know about you guys, but when I read all this, I think to myself, how undeserving am I to be able to have a **relationship** with God. You can admit this or not, but the reality is that we are some brats when we come face to face with the Holy God. BUT that’s one of many facts that makes the God of the Bible the one true God and unlike any other religions of the world.* Other religions say “do this and do that and you get to Heaven” with an emphasis on Heaven being the main focus, BUT the Bible says the true treasure is being in relation with God.

That brings us to our first main point.1. HE CALLS US TO AN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP.
	1. **This father/child relationship is a gift.**
		1. What does Jesus say in Matthew 6:9?
		2. “Pray then like this: Our FATHER in Heaven, hallowed be your name”
		3. Jesus invites us to address who we are praying to as “Our Father”
		4. Alistair Begg, a sound biblical pastor and author said “The name “Father” does not go up to God from us, BUT comes down from God to us.” Meaning God reveals and gives us this name to call Him. We didn’t give it to him, we didn’t earn the right to call him Father, HE GAVE it to us.
	2. **It's a relationship, not religion.**
		1. Guys, this goes beyond just going to church on Sundays. That isn’t the intimacy He calls us to. That’s superficial, that’s religion; it isn’t what we call Faith.
		2. SOME OF US KNOW and have experienced what a relationship with an earthly father that we just see once every other week or maybe never. That type of relationship is quite limited, is it not? OR maybe we have fathers who work so much, you barely get to spend time with them, “I’m too busy”
			1. Fair warning, I am not shaming your parents who work too much haha, but this is part of their humanity and the fallen world we live in.
	3. **He is there, so go to Him.**
		1. Here is the comfort: OUR HEAVENLY FATHER WILL NEVER SAY THE WORDS “I am too busy, come back later”
		2. Scripture says, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” Deuteronomy 31:6
	4. **An intimate relationship takes COMMUNICATION.**
		1. This is why prayer is crucial to your walk with Christ.
		2. Just as you would confide in your earthly parent who is limited in power and knowledge, for help, you should ALSO be confiding, relying, communicating with your Heavenly Father who is all-powerful.

KEEP IN MIND: We as humans like to project notions of our worldly fathers to our Heavenly Father. I just wanted to point that out because it is dangerous to do that. You won’t find complete comfort in seeing God as Father if you see Him just as your earthly dad, yet that is something we have a tendency to do at times.The second point where we can see God as Father is in the way He treats us. 1. HE FATHERS US GENTLY WITH **COMPASSION**.
	1. **God provides security as a father would**.
		1. Psalm 103 says the following phrases: “Redeems your life from the pit” ; “The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.”
		2. Our Heavenly Father knows and cares for you. He is near to those who are broken and weak. Look at David, he is saying all these things about God & from what scripture has revealed about David is that he spent most of his life on the run. David had an orphan heart too. His own father didn’t love him properly. When God called David, he was working the fields where his earthly father put him. Yet with all those not so great experiences, David was able to feel a sense of closeness, a sense of security from who God the Father was. David didn’t let the experiences with his earthly father ruin how he saw God.
		3. 1 Peter 5: 6-7 “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
			1. Not only does God care for you, but He will also DO something about it (“lift you up in due time”)
	2. **God disciplines because He is not only JUST, but a Father.**
		1. Discipline: “An expression of love by bringing correction for the good of the person being disciplined.”
		2. READ Hebrews 12:5-10 (Leader can read this or assign it to a student(s))
		3. God disciplines those whom He loves. It does not come from a heart of anger, but of genuine fatherly love.
		4. The fact you are being disciplined is evidence that you are a Child of God.
		5. Also, when you understand God for who He is, you rejoice in discipline. You understand that you have sinned and need to be disciplined by a perfect Father who knows best for you.
		6. Someone once said, “A judge can state that you are not guilty, but a judge DOES NOT invite you over to his house for pancakes, or invites you to become a member of his family.”
* BUT OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN WHO IS JUST CALLS US SONS AND DAUGHTERS
1. **God is consistent as a Father should be.**
	1. How does that song go?

“You heard Your children thenYou hear Your children nowYou are the same GodYou are the same God” 1. And so on right, but the point is God is the same yesterday, present and future.
2. In a fallen world, consistency is hard to find, yet we see time after time God shows up.

Soooo… HOW can we confidently call God “Abba, Father” **YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN!** Out with the old, in with the new. We are so dead in our sins that we need a complete new spiritual birth, in order to become spiritual children of God. This is what Christ came to do.* John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.
* **IMPORTANT TO NOTE:** According to Scripture, God is the Creator of all things, but He is not the Father of everyone. The following verse states we were once not children of God
	+ Look at Ephesians 2:1-6 - “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **i**n which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience – among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and **were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.** But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.
* **Adoption**:
	+ Galatians 4:4-7 “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, *“Abba*, Father.” So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”
		- For those who don’t know“Abba” is arameric for “my father”
		- This is your identity now, an heir, a Child of God.
	+ God states it Himself through the prophet Isaiah. He states the words that every child longs to hear from a father, “I love you.”
		- (NIV) Isaiah 43: 1-7: But now, this is what the LORD says— he who created you, Jacob, he who formed you, Israel: “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. **2** When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze. **3** For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. **4** Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because **I love you**, I will give people in exchange for you, nations in exchange for your life. **5** Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. **6** I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ and to the south, ‘Do not hold them back.’ Bring **my sons** from afar and **my daughters** from the ends of the earth—**7** everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.”

Yes, we fall short of the glory of God constantly, but your sin is NOT your identity, sonship is the identity Christ has given you. **God loves you as sons and daughters, it literally says it in scripture. What a comfort that is knowing the God of the Universe loves you and ransoms nations for His children. We are confident in this, for at the right time, through the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, we were made heirs.****End of lesson.**Leader feel free to share the parable of the prodigal son to show God’s love, but only if you want and have time. It could help them create a better mental image. * Luke 15: 11-32 “Compassion” “Father” mentioned
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| Wrap-up (Conclusion) | The main idea we want you to understand from this part of scripture is God is abundantly perfect. Isn’t it amazing that our words can’t fall short of describing His awesome and true essence. His character is so beyond our imagination that our best and most beautiful descriptions of Him fall short, yet we can confidently say, this is the God we follow, He is “Abba, Father”To recap Psalm 103, interestingly enough, hits on the 4 parts of our series. * Verse 14 says, “For he knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust.” (Shows God as Creator)
* Verse 6 says, “The Lord works righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed.” (Shows God as Judge)
* Verse 4 says, “who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (shows God as Servant, doing all the work for an undeserving people)
* Verse 13 says “As a father shows compassion to his children, so the Lord shows compassion to those who fear him.” (Shows God as Father)

Many of you may be looking to your biological fathers or father figures for the perfect love that they can’t give. Don’t forget they are human, part of being human is being imperfect. While it is a father’s responsibility to lead the household, none of them can do it perfectly. That is why we should strive to look for that perfect love from the only One who can give it to us, Yahweh.  |
| Group Discussion (Qs for Small groups) | 1. What character attribute of God comforts you the most?
2. Has someone reflected God’s gentleness and compassion to you? In what ways can you be more gentle and compassionate towards others?
3. What does it mean to be made heirs?
	1. For Leader - Found this great answer that explains it well after the students answer, “The New Testament portrays Jesus Christ as God’s “firstborn” Son ([Hebrews 1:6](https://www.bibleref.com/Hebrews/1/Hebrews-1-6.html), see [Psalm 89:27](https://www.bibleref.com/Psalms/89/Psalm-89-27.html)); that is, Jesus holds the “birthright” and is the heir of all the Father has ([Hebrews 1:2](https://www.bibleref.com/Hebrews/1/Hebrews-1-2.html)). God has given Christ all of creation as a gift, because all was created for Him ([Colossians 1:16](https://www.bibleref.com/Colossians/1/Colossians-1-16.html); [John 3:35](https://www.bibleref.com/John/3/John-3-35.html)). The inheritance that Christ receives includes believers, those whom the Father has given to the Son ([John 6:37](https://www.bibleref.com/John/6/John-6-37.html)).Believers are co-heirs with Christ ([Romans 8:17](https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/8/Romans-8-17.html)). Meaning, believers have been given the privilege of sharing Christ’s inheritance. As adopted sons of God, Christians are treated as firstborn heirs ([Hebrews 12:23](https://www.bibleref.com/Hebrews/12/Hebrews-12-23.html)).
4. Can you call God, Father, but reject the Son?
	1. (For Leader - 1 John 2:23)
5. What has stood out to you the most throughout this series? Is there one thing in particular that will stick with you?
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