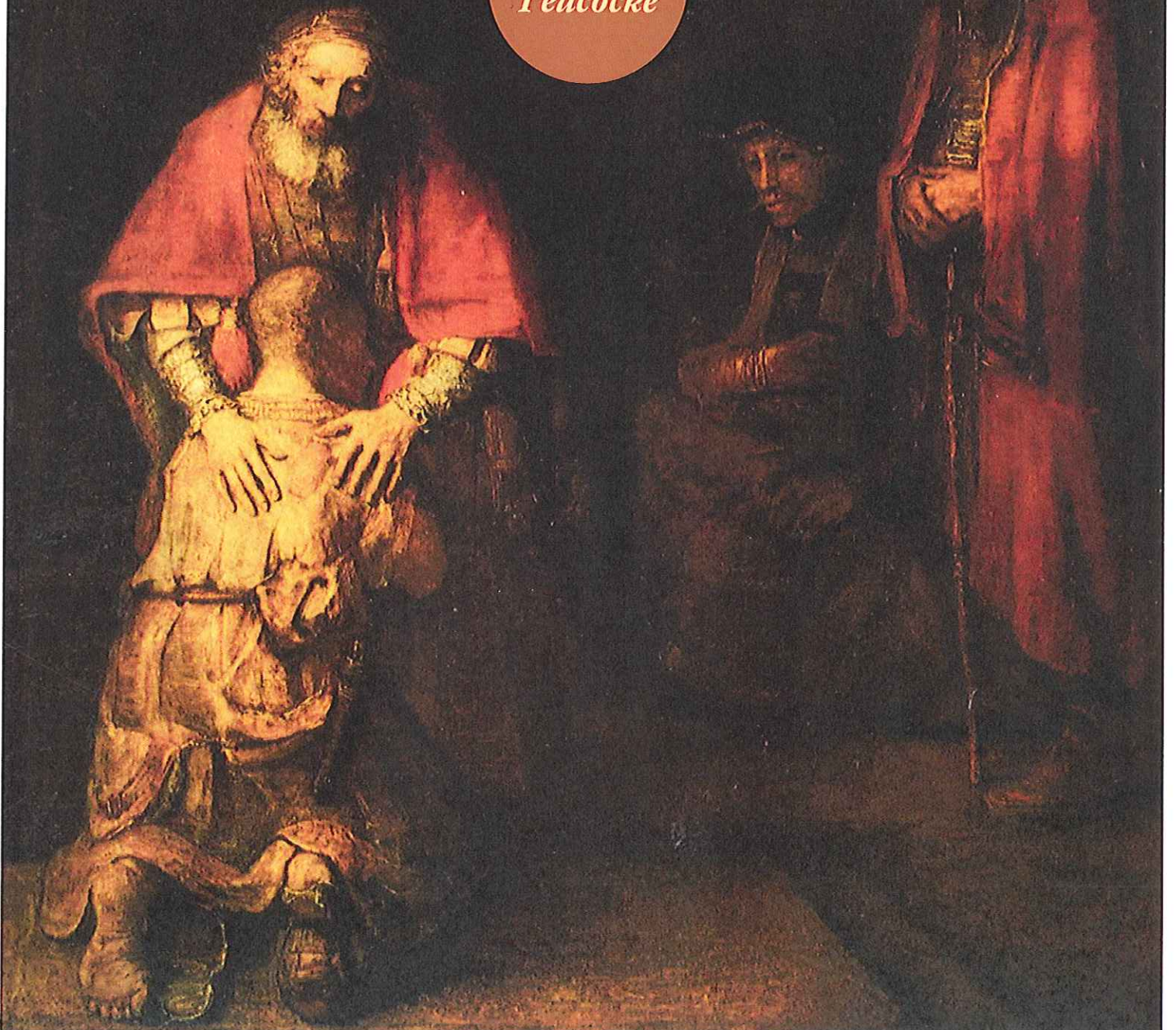
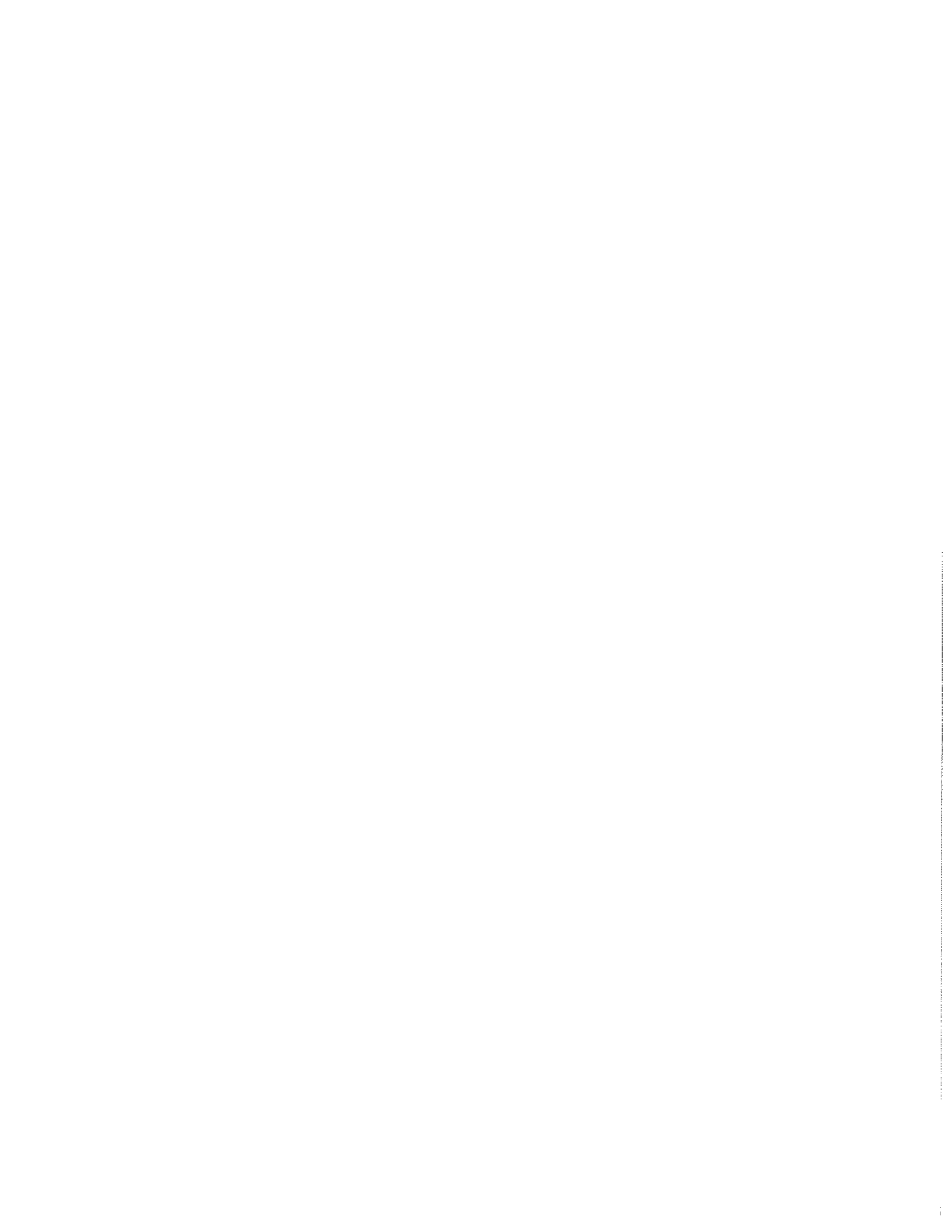


Knowing God as Father

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Knowing God As Our Father

Purposes:

- To begin to understand more clearly the mystery of our God in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- To begin to more clearly identify Christ's mission to lead us to God the Father as the Supreme point of life, authority, and the center of Christ's own life.
- To discover how to relate to our Father more fully and to please Him more as His sons and daughters.

Teaching Number One

Fellowshipping with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

I. God is one Being who dwells within three distinct personalities.

A. God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, theologically speaking, is a subject of immense debate, study, and mystery.

1. The word "Trinity" never appears in scripture, but God as Father, Son, and Spirit appears a number of times in the Old Testament.
2. The early Church Fathers dealt with many heresies, debates, and councils regarding the doctrine of the "Three-in-One God," culminating in the Council of Chalcedon, A.D. 451. If you are interested in the debates, an excellent source of study is "The Creeds of Christendom" by Philip Schaff.
3. With the exceptions of the Jehovah's Witnesses and some "Jesus Only" Pentecostal groups, all historic church denominations stand squarely behind the Church Councils' doctrines (Apostle's Creed, etc.) regarding the Trinity.

B. How can one God (Deuteronomy 6:4) dwell in three different persons?

Diagram One:

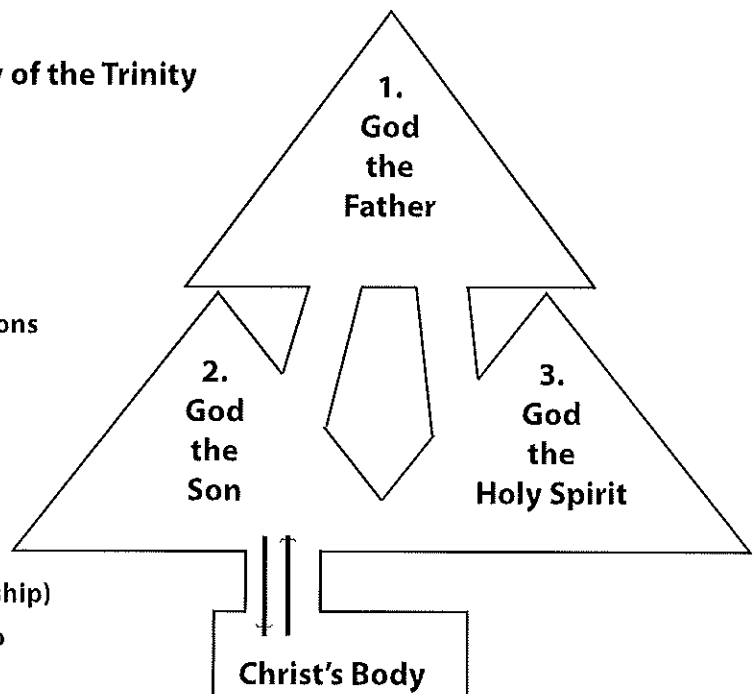
One Way of Looking at the Mystery of the Trinity

ISSUES:

1. One essence and character
2. Three distinct personalities
3. Three distinct but interrelated functions

TEXTS:

- John 17:11, 21, 22, 23 (Unity)
- I Corinthians 15:22-28 (Father's headship)
- Ephesians 1:17-23 (Church's service to Father, to fill "all in all")



II. The Godhead (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) form “Father God’s Community” and as such is the community, relationship, and Kingdom into which His children are born and matured.

A. As Jesus pointed out in His prayer in John 17, redeemed man has been called to participate in the Godhead’s life and purposes.

1. Christ has, through the Holy Spirit, birthed us into God’s Kingdom family (John 3:3; Col. 1:12-13).
2. “In Christ” we have access to all Christ’s family heritage (Rom. 8:17).

B. The Godhead’s relationship within Itself is the “lived-out” model or pattern for us to study and follow in these revealed areas:

1. Fatherhood — Sonship
2. Spiritual authority — discipleship
3. Pastoral care — priestly service
4. Sending — receiving
5. Fellowship through co-laboring
6. Division of labor — spheres of authority
7. Direct rule — rule through another (Ps. 110)

TEACHING NUMBER TWO

Knowing Our Heavenly Father's Love as the Source of All Life

PART 1

I. Christ's mission on earth was primarily to lead Father's elected sons and daughters back to Father as the source of all life, authority, and purpose in Christ.

- A. Jesus came at Father's sending (John 5:24,30,36;6:29) to lead us back home to Father.
 - 1. God the Son is the *bridge* (Priest, Mediator, way) to God the Father (John 14:6; 17:3 etc.) who is the source of all life.
 - 2. There is only one supreme issue: are you received by the Father in Christ?
- B. Father "begot" Jesus (John 1:14, 5:26, 6:57, 20:17; Gal. 4:4; Ps. 2:7-8) as His only Son so as to adopt the rest of us into Father's house (Gal. 4:5-7).
 - 1. Jesus taught us that Father is His head and His God (John 14:28; 1 Cor. 11:3) and that He is under the Father's supreme authority.
 - 2. We have "peace" only because Father has accepted us into His family in Christ (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4; 2 John 3).
 - 3. Jesus came to re-unite us with our Father, removing the curse of a divided family (Mal. 4:4-6) and to receive us home (Luke 15: The Prodigal).
 - 4. Jesus taught us to pray to Father (Matt. 6:9), not Himself, and the Church Fathers begin the major creeds with, "I believe in God the Father Almighty..."

II. Our Heavenly Father only relates to us "in Christ."

- A. Our salvation is "in Christ," which means Father cannot know us in terms of relating to us—except as our lives, thoughts, and actions are in Christ's Spirit.
 - 1. Paul showed us this in a pregnant little phrase in Galatians 4:9: *"But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?"*
 - 2. Father's holiness cannot fellowship with sin because He is light, with neither shadow or shade (James 1:18) and sin cannot enter His light. This is why even Jesus had to stand outside of His presence when He was forsaken by Father as a sin offering at calvary (Mark 15:34).
 - 3. When we are practicing sin, we are out of His presence and re-enter only through forgiveness in Christ.
 - 4. Let me share something of a "presentation experience" I had in 1970 to God the Father.
- B. Father, as the guardian of spiritual revelation, is the One who releases the Holy Spirit to take us into truth.
 - 1. Father releases the revelation of Christ to the elect (Matt. 16:18; Rom. 8:15).
 - 2. The Father and Jesus release the Holy Spirit to us, upon Father's selection of election, (Matt.3:11; John 14:16-18;16:7-14;17:2,6).
 - 3. Relating to and glorifying the Father is not a threat to Jesus but rather His earnest delight!**

C. God the Father is not a harsh Father who needs a gentle, mediating "mother" like Jesus to get in between Him and His children.

1. Father's exact character, love, and nature are revealed in Jesus of Nazareth (John 14:9; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3 "the exact representation of His nature").
2. The fatherhood of God is perhaps the most misunderstood caricature under spiritual attack on the earth.

TEACHING NUMBER Three

Knowing Our Heavenly Father's Love as the Source of Life

PART II

I. Let us look further at some of the scripture's teaching on the attributes of our Heavenly Father (Gal. 4:1-2).

- A. He is the One who sets our *course of disciplines*, because of His love for our fellowship with Jesus made possible through believers accepting their ruling responsibilities with Christ.
1. We can only rule with Jesus (fellowship through qualification) if we have been purged by discipline (Rom. 8:17).
 2. Hebrews 12:1-5 is the classic text of the marks of our heavenly Father's love through the purging of our selfishness and immaturity.
 3. The book of Proverbs is the text for a father's impartation of the wisdom of life to a son or daughter.
 4. Our Father is the guardian of Christ's Church and the "pruner of the vines" (John 15:1-2).
- B. Father, as already mentioned, is the one *to whom we pray*, as we draw upon both the grace of our faith and Jesus' bank account on our behalf.
1. The following scriptures should help us to come to Daddy (Abba) in order to discover how to please Him and do His will.
 2. **Matt. 6:1** "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven."
 - Matt. 6:4** "That your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."
 - Matt. 6:6** "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."
 - Matt. 6:8** "Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."
 - Matt. 6:9** "Pray, then, in this way: Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name."
 - Matt. 6:18** "So that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you."
 - John 14:16** "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever."
 - John 16:23,26** "And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you in My name."
 - 1 John 3:1** "See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him."

C. Father is our source of protection, honor, worship, reward, forgiveness.

1. **Matt. 6:14** "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."

Matt. 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

Matt. 7:11 "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is to those who ask Him!"

Matt. 18:19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven."

Matt. 18:35 "So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Matt. 20:23 "He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

Matt. 26:53 "Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels?"

2. **Luke 10:22** "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

Luke 12:30 "For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek, but your Father, knows that you need these things."

Luke 23:34 "But Jesus was saying, 'Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves."

3. **John 4:34** "Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.'"

John 6:37 "All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me; and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out."

John 6:45 "It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every one who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me."

John 10:29 "My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."

4. It is Jesus, not Father, *who will be our judge* (John 5:22, 45).

D. Our Father has called us to be sons to Him rather than slaves to law, duty, or "obedience" (Gal. 4:7).

1. Some of the differences between sons and servants are illustrated in the following diagram:

<u>SONS</u>	<u>SERVANTS</u>
1. See the law as family characteristics.	1. See the law as an impartial standard of obedience.
2. Work for the benefit of the family.	2. Work for wages or rewards.
3. Have a "being" focus.	3. Have a "doing" focus.
4. Operate out of love.	4. Operate out of duty.

The scripture says that "the earth quakes when a slave becomes a King" (Prov. 30:22).

DIAGRAM TWO

Sons or Servants?

TEACHING NUMBER FOUR

Drawing from Our Natural Experiences

I. Paul tells us that our natural families are the great “seminary” and qualifier for spiritual responsibility as church-family leadership.

- A. Good natural fathers tend to make good spiritual fathers (1 Tim. 3:4-5; Titus 1:6).
 - 1. Honoring our fathers and mothers (4th commandment) teaches us to become honorable fathers and mothers ourselves.
 - 2. Because God’s people are a family, relating to them as “parishioners,” “sheep,” “assignments,” etc. is playing into the building of religious corporations rather than spiritual family.
 - 3. Relating generationally, through our fathers, gives us an anchor of meaning and of history (Isa. 51:2; Matt. 3:9; Luke 1:73; Rom. 4:16).
- B. Unfortunately, many of us have to work hard to overcome negative relationships with a natural father as an obstacle in relating in a healthy way to our heavenly Father (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21).
 - 1. This is why it is so critical to stand in the sovereignty of God. What is He working in you as a result of the natural father He gave you?
 - 2. Spiritual “fathers” (1 Cor. 4:15) therefore have a significant responsibility to represent God’s Fatherhood to whom they give care.

II. For most of us who are natural fathers or mothers, we are on a journey from being “sons” and brothers” to becoming spiritual fathers and mothers.

- A. Henri Nouwen has written a powerful book entitled, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, which deals with this journey.
 - 1. The cover of our Seminar Manual has Rembrandt’s picture of “The Return of the Prodigal” upon it.
 - 2. This book takes us through the life journey of standing in the understanding of the rebel son, the obedient son, and the father. This picture is worth a thousand words.
- B. Our Heavenly Father has already received us in Christ, anxiously waiting to place a robe and ring upon us and celebrate our return with a feast.
 - 1. What obstacles in ourselves of unbelief, ignorance, and fear have we created for Him?
 - 2. What must we do to change this so as to receive Him and fellowship with Him until we hear or feel Him say, “Behold my beloved son/daughter in whom I am well pleased.”



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