

This weekly guide has been created as a tool to help you study individually and/or in a small group and live what you are learning from the Bible and weekend services here at RiverGlen.

In Acts 2:42 we are told that the people in the first church were living out what they were learning from the apostles' teaching. **The purpose of this guide is to equip you to put into practice what you learn.**



Suburban Legends This is our last week in a 7 week relationship series called "Suburban Legends". Suburban legends are things we are told about relationships and sometimes it is really hard to tell if it's a legend or if it's true. This weekend in honor of Father's Day our message is all about Fathers!

Week 7: "My Dad Doesn't Know Anything"

Your Experience: It has been said that the relationship we have with our earthly father strongly influences our theology regarding our heavenly Father. List 3 healthy and 3 unhealthy characteristics that describe your earthly father.

Unhealthy: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

Healthy: 1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____

After examining your father's characteristics, think about the possible "myths" or beliefs that you may have developed as "truth" about God's ability to be....

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loving | <input type="checkbox"/> Available | <input type="checkbox"/> Tender | <input type="checkbox"/> Forgiving | <input type="checkbox"/> Ever-present |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merciful | <input type="checkbox"/> Safe | <input type="checkbox"/> Trusted | <input type="checkbox"/> Redeeming | |

Which of the above characteristics of God are you presently struggling with and why?

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

1. List words that indicate how God describes His love and what He provides for us as His children.
2. As God's adopted children, what truths do we need to adopt about God?
3. What was the significance of what Paul was trying to relay about our heavenly Father when he said "I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened?"

Your Choice: A toxin can be described as a poisonous substance that is produced by living cells or organisms and is capable of causing disease when introduced into the body. We tend to see toxins mainly as a threat to our physical well-being. However, today, I want to challenge you to be aware of other types of toxins that are an imminent threat to our spiritual and emotional well-being. Share some words or messages you received from your father that endangered your spiritual and emotional well-being.

In what way did the residual effects of those toxic words manifest themselves in your life? (Check which apply to you.)

- Bitterness Resentment Anger Inability to feel close to others
 Fear Never measuring up

Solomon knew the persuasive and toxic impact words can play in our lives. He described the tongue as “having the power of life and death.” And if one does not take an active role in eradicating these toxins through the filter of our heavenly Father, the results can be fatal. That’s why he encourages us by saying, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (Prov. 4:23). Paul tells us “to be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Take time to identify those toxic messages (spoken or unspoken) given by your earthly father, and replace them with the truths of your heavenly father. Remember that our primary identity is no longer in the flesh, but in Christ.

You Are His: We all have the desire to feel loved and accepted by our father. When you look back, how do you feel you gained your father’s attention? Was it through performance, achievement or negative attention? Did you feel like your father’s love was based more on what you did instead of who you were? Did you ever feel you had to compromise your character (persistence, honesty, commitment, diligence, compassion, etc.) to gain the attention you desired from your father? Were there values—healthy or unhealthy—you had to acquire to feel accepted? I know one person who said the only time he felt his father’s acceptance was when they drank together.

Read Romans 5:8; I John 4:9,10; Ephesians 2:8,9

In the song *Who Am I?*, Casting Crowns puts it this way: “Not because of who I am, but because of what You’ve done. Not because of what I’ve done, but because of who You are.”

1. What requirements do you feel are needed to “earn” your heavenly Father’s love?
2. Can you embrace the fact that we don’t earn God’s love? His love for us is not based on our works.

When you struggle with feeling loved, hold on to the truths that we are God’s beloved, that He delights in us, that His love for us endures forever and that He will not abandon us. I John 3:1 says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” We are His!

Your Challenge: The statistics for children growing up fatherless are alarming. Due to the increasing number of divorces, one statistic indicates that more than half of American children will spend “a significant part of their childhood living apart from their fathers” by the time they turn 18. Do you ever wonder what the impact of not having a father would be? Share some potential outcomes.

For those individuals who are fatherless, I realize that the desire to be important in the eyes of your father doesn’t go away. God is sensitive to this and gives a voice to your pain. Read Psalm 10:14; Psalm 68:4-6; Psalm 82:3. For those who have an earthly father, notice what scriptural responsibilities we have to the fatherless. Read Isaiah 1:17 Jer. 22:3. Today, I challenge the fatherless to seek out godly mentors and allow them to be an extension of our heavenly Father.

Reflection & Prayer *Lord, God help me realize that my earthly father was/is an imperfect being. Give me wisdom to recognize any toxins that have grown in me regarding our relationship and to confess them and receive Your forgiveness. Lord show me how to embrace my true worth in You as my Heavenly Father and to live in Your Truth experiencing You as my perfect Father. In Your Name we pray. Amen.*