

Question: How can I view God as a loving Father when the relationship I have experienced with my earthly father has been very strained?

We must understand that God represents the perfect, ideal father (Matthew 5:48). Fathers on earth reflect the fatherhood of God only to the extent that they imitate the ways of God the heavenly father. Although no human father can ever measure up to the heavenly father, each one should strive to love and care for his children as God does. Jesus once said, “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). Earthly fatherhood raised to its very highest level can give us only a faint glimpse of the wondrous fatherhood of God.

In the eyes of many young children, daddy can do no wrong. However, at some point the child recognizes that the father has his weaknesses and failings. When this happens, some children become so disillusioned with their fathers that they have great difficulty trusting them again. But to expect perfection in our earthly fathers is as unfair as it is for fathers to look for perfection in their children. Fathers of this world are sinners; they have their flaws and stand in need of forgiveness and grace. Apart from God’s grace, we are all inadequate. Thankfully, most children eventually come to a more realistic understanding of their fathers, themselves and life in this world.

Once we understand the above distinctions between earthly fathers and the heavenly father, both earthly fathers and their children can find their needs met by the father who is Lord of heaven and earth (Luke 10:21). Jesus spoke of a time when “Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death” (Matthew 10:21). But the Psalmist said, “Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me” (Psalm 27:10). As “a father to the fatherless” (Psalm 68:5), God has not given us “a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but . . . a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Romans 8:15). No other father has ever loved his children to the extent that God has loved us. Even if your earthly father has died or has deserted or abused you, your heavenly father stands with

open arms and tenderly calls you to be enfolded in his eternal embrace. Get to know him and allow him to be a father to you as only he can. “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1).

[Send questions or comments to University Church of Christ, 801 N. 12th, Murray, KY 42071 or phone 270-753-1881. This article is reproduced on the web: www.nchrist.org] 2012/06/15