

45-Minute Small Group Bible Study

GOD THE FATHER

The Christian Faith, pages 7-9

Purpose: To know God the Father not merely as a distant Creator or abstract supreme being, but as the Father of the eternal Son, the giver and sustainer of all life, the wise Lord of providence, and the loving Father revealed to us through Jesus Christ.

Main Truth: God the Father is the eternal Father of the Son and the Creator of all things. He gives and preserves life, wisely provides for his creatures, works even amid evil to accomplish his good purposes, and through Jesus reveals his gracious heart toward those whom he adopts as his children.

1. Opening Prayer - 2 minutes

Heavenly Father, every good gift comes from your gracious hand. Through your Son, Jesus Christ, and by your Holy Spirit, teach us to know you as you truly are. Give us trust in your care, confidence in your fatherly love, and gratitude for all that you provide. Amen.

2. Opening Discussion - 3 minutes

Begin with one or two questions:

1. When people call God “Father,” what different ideas or emotions might that word bring with it?
2. Why is it important that Christian teaching about the Father begins with his relationship to Jesus, the eternal Son?
3. Where do you find it easiest - and hardest - to trust God’s fatherly care?

3. Read the Doctrinal Statement - 2 minutes

Have one person read the doctrinal statement for “God the Father” on pages 7-8. Listen for three movements: who the Father is, how he provides and governs, and how we come to know his gracious heart.

4. The Father Is the Eternal Father of the Son - 5 minutes

Read: Ephesians 4:6

Paul confesses “one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in us all.”

Discuss:

1. What does this say about the Father’s divine majesty and universal lordship?

2. How does this fit within the confession of one God rather than making the Father one god alongside the Son and Spirit?

Read: John 1:18; 4:24

John says that no one has ever seen God, and Jesus says that God is spirit.

Discuss:

1. Why can God not be confined to a place or reduced to a physical image?
2. Who makes the unseen God known according to John 1:18?

Read: Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6

The New Testament repeatedly names “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and says that all things are from the Father and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Discuss:

1. Why is “Father” first of all a name within God’s eternal life, not simply a metaphor borrowed from human parenting?
2. How do Father and Son act together in creation and salvation?

Key Insight: Christian faith does not begin with a generic god and later add the title “Father.” The Father is eternally Father because he is the Father of the Son. We are brought into that fatherly relationship only through Christ.

5. The Father Is Creator - and Makes Believers His Children - 4 minutes

Read: Malachi 2:10

Malachi asks, “Don’t we all have one Father? Hasn’t one God created us?”

Discuss:

1. In what sense is God Father as Creator of all people?
2. Why does creation alone not yet describe the full New Testament gift of adoption?

Read: John 1:12; 20:17

Those who believe in Christ receive the right to become children of God, and the risen Jesus speaks of “my Father and your Father.”

Discuss:

1. What new relationship is given through faith in Christ?
2. Why is it significant that Jesus distinguishes “my Father” and “your Father” while also sharing his Father with us?

6. Every Good Gift Comes from the Father - 4 minutes

Read: James 1:17

Every good act of giving and every perfect gift comes from above, from the Father who does not change.

Discuss:

1. How does this passage connect God's generosity with his unchanging character?
2. What ordinary gifts of daily life are easy to overlook as coming from the Father?

Read: Psalm 145:13, 15-16

The Lord is faithful and merciful toward all he has made; every creature depends on his open hand.

Discuss:

1. What picture of dependence does this psalm give us?
2. How might receiving daily life as gift reshape gratitude, anxiety, or entitlement?

7. The Father's Providence Is Personal - 4 minutes

Read: Matthew 10:29-31

Jesus says that not even a sparrow falls apart from the Father's knowledge and consent, and that even the hairs of our heads are numbered.

Discuss:

1. What does Jesus want fearful disciples to conclude from the Father's detailed knowledge?
2. How does "you are worth more than many sparrows" guard against viewing providence as cold fate?

Key Insight: Providence is not merely the claim that "everything happens for a reason." Scripture speaks more personally: the Father knows, values, gives, sustains, and governs his creatures. Christian trust rests in the character of the Father, not in our ability to decode every event.

8. The Father Works Amid Evil Without Being Its Author - 4 minutes

Read: Genesis 50:20

Joseph tells his brothers, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

Discuss:

1. How does Joseph distinguish the brothers' evil intention from God's good intention?
2. Why is that distinction important when we speak about suffering and providence?

Read: Romans 8:28

Paul says that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose.

Discuss:

1. Does this verse call evil good, or does it confess that God can bring good through what is evil?
2. How is “according to his purpose” different from promising that every event will make immediate sense to us?

9. We Are the Work of the Father’s Hand - 4 minutes

Read: Isaiah 64:8

Isaiah confesses, “You are our father. We are the clay, and you are our potter. All of us are the work of your hand.”

Discuss:

1. What does the potter-and-clay image teach about dependence, creatureliness, and trust?
2. How does calling the potter “our Father” keep the image from becoming impersonal?

Read: Romans 1:19-20

Creation makes God’s eternal power and divine nature evident to humanity.

Discuss:

1. What can creation truly reveal about God?
2. According to the doctrinal statement, what can creation not tell us with certainty about God’s gracious will toward sinners?

10. The Father’s Heart Is Revealed in Jesus - 4 minutes

Read: John 14:9-11

Jesus says, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father,” and speaks of his mutual indwelling with the Father.

Discuss:

1. Why should Christians look to Jesus rather than speculation to know what the Father is like?
2. How does the cross and resurrection change the way we hear the words “heavenly Father”?

Read: 1 John 3:1

John marvels: “See the kind of love the Father has given us.”

Discuss:

1. Why is becoming a child of God something to marvel at rather than take for granted?
2. How does the Gospel give a deeper knowledge of the Father than natural revelation alone?

11. Bringing It Together - 2 minutes

The Father is the eternal Father of the Son, the Creator and giver of life, and the wise Lord of providence. Creation displays his power, but Jesus reveals his gracious heart. Through Christ we are

not merely creatures under divine rule; we are adopted children who receive daily life from the Father's hand and trust his good purpose even when we cannot trace it.

12. Application Questions - 5 minutes

Choose two or three:

1. Which Scripture most deepens your understanding of what it means to call God "Father"?
2. What daily gifts could you begin receiving more consciously as gifts from your Father?
3. How can Genesis 50:20 help you speak carefully about God's providence without calling evil good?
4. When anxiety rises, what difference does Jesus' teaching about sparrows and numbered hairs make?
5. Where might you be trying to know the Father through your circumstances rather than through Jesus?

13. Closing Prayer - 2 minutes

Heavenly Father, you created us and sustain us with every good gift. Forgive us for our ingratitude, fear, and attempts to judge your heart by our circumstances. Thank you for showing us your love in Jesus and for making believers your children. Teach us to trust your care, receive your gifts with thanksgiving, and rest in your good purpose even when we do not understand your ways. Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.