



Imagining Freedom

Small Group Discussion Guide

Week of September 27, 2026

Primary scripture text: Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 8:1-10

Secondary scripture texts: Ps 105:37-45; Gal 5:1, 13-15; Jn 8:31-36

Learning outcome: Participants will be able to understand and articulate how calling God “Father” shapes how we freely receive his love, re-shapes our experience of suffering, and motivates our obedience.

Questions that are marked with an asterisk () are priorities. If you are worried about having enough time, focus on these questions and skip those that are unmarked.*

LOOKING BACK (5 MINUTES)

Last week’s discussion was focused on how the Holy Spirit renews our hearts to make us more like Jesus and deepen our love for others.

Invite any willing participants to share briefly about how their heart is being captivated by Jesus and softening toward others through concrete acts of love.

DISCUSSING DEUTERONOMY (12 MINUTES)

Ask one or two group members to read Deuteronomy 7:6-11; 8:1-10 aloud.

Invite listeners to notice: Deuteronomy 7 calls God’s people his “chosen” and “treasured possession.” How does God’s election frame the way we think about our freedom?

1. *In these passages, what is the basis for God’s people being “holy” (set apart)?
2. *What are God’s people freed *from*? What are they freed *for*?
3. In Deuteronomy 8, what aspect of character does God wish to produce in his people?

4. How are freedom and humility connected in these passages?
5. How does this passage speak to suffering? What is promised?

OPENING THE CATECHISM (10 MINUTES)

The assigned reading for this week was Qs. 165-171; 188-192. These are attached at the end of this document.

1. Did anything in the assigned catechism questions strike you as encouraging, challenging, or confusing?
2. *In QS 165-171 what are the characteristics of God's Fatherhood? Which most attracts you?
3. According to the catechism, how do we become children of God?
4. Why does it matter that we pray to our "Father who art in heaven?"
5. *When you pray "give us this day our daily bread..." what do you typically envision when you think of this phrase? How does the catechism invite you to think and pray differently?

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (13 MINUTES)

Read this excerpt from Tyler Staton's *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* (Zondervan, 2022)

*Calling God "Father" is dismissable today. It rolls off the tongue as unconsciously as the lyrics of "Happy Birthday" as you carry a candlelit cake to the table. ...worse yet, for some its use is grouped in with a centuries long patriarchal history of male superiority and female oppression. But the disciples likely gasped when Jesus said it. The temple that served as a training ground for their prayers had taught them to pray with supreme reverence. The grounding text for the people's understanding of God was the book of Exodus - when the Lord appeared to the people in the form of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The big question in ancient days wasn't "Does God exist?" It would be foolish to ask such a question....Instead, the existential question in ancient days was, "is God **knowable**?" Because a pillar of fire doesn't provoke doubt, but neither does it provide intimacy. ...Jesus did nothing to diminish the reverence, nothing to minimize the power of God. Jesus made that powerful God knowable.*

*Jesus didn't introduce them to a new God. He was abundantly clear about that. ...Jesus prayed to the revered God of power and judgment with the familiarity of **Father**. ..The reverence of ancient Israel is extinct in the modern West. We live without sacredness,*

yawning at the very words that made the disciples gasp. Our world is a million miles from theirs. Our hearts though, are the same.

Now in my second decade of pastoral ministry I can say confidently that the number one obstacle that the modern person faces when it comes to prayer is an inability to receive the love of God. We struggle to believe in a God as powerful, good, knowable, and loving as the one Jesus introduces us to. "God is love" (I John 4:8). It's who he is, the summary of his character boiled down to a single defining word. We buy that intellectually, but at a deeper level, somewhere in our emotions, in our bones, we don't trust it (56-57).

Discussion questions

1. Staton refers to the prayer life of Jesus as grounded in both reverence and intimacy. How is your prayer life similar or different?
2. How might you cultivate a prayer life of intimacy with the Father?

CONCLUDING ACTIVITY (5 MINUTES)

Allow group members to take a minute or two of silence to name before God their gratitude for his steadfast love as Father and to name what "daily bread" they need this week. Then invite them to share with the group if they are open to doing so.

Close by standing together to recite the Lord's prayer.

163. How is the Lord's Prayer a pattern for prayer?

The Lord's Prayer models the primary types of prayer: praise of God, intercession for his rule, petition for his provision and protection, and confession of sins. I should pray regularly in all these ways. (*Psalm 150; Isaiah 63:7–64:12; Acts 9:36–43; 3 John 2*)

164. What are the parts of the Lord's Prayer?

The traditional form of the Lord's Prayer begins by addressing God the Father, makes seven petitions, adds a doxology, and concludes with "Amen."

**THE ADDRESS: "OUR FATHER,
WHO ART IN HEAVEN"**

165. Why do we call God "Father"?

We call God "Father" because Jesus teaches his disciples that we are God's children and should call God "our Father." (*Exodus 4:22; Psalm 73:15; Isaiah 43:6; Matthew 23:8–9; 2 Corinthians 6:18; see questions 39–40*)

166. Who are God's children?

All who come to God through faith and Baptism in Christ are adopted as children of God the Father. (*Deuteronomy 32:1–6; Isaiah 30:1; John 1:12–13; Romans 8:14–16; 1 John 3:1–3*)

167. Why does Jesus teach us to pray "our" Father?

Jesus teaches us always to understand ourselves not only as individuals but as members of God's family of believers, and to pray accordingly. (*Psalm 147; Romans 8:14–19; 1 Peter 1:17*)

168. How is God like earthly fathers?

Like all loving and sincere earthly fathers, God loves us in our weakness, provides for our needs, teaches us in our ignorance,

and corrects us when we go astray. (*Psalm 103:12–14; Luke 11:11–13; Hebrews 12:5–10*)

169. How is God unlike earthly fathers?

Unlike our natural fathers, our heavenly Father loves us perfectly, is almighty in his care, makes no errors in judgment, and disciplines us only for our good. (*1 Samuel 2:12–17, 22–36; Psalm 145:8–21; Luke 11:11–13; 15:11–32; Hebrews 12:9–11*)

170. What is heaven?

Heaven is the realm of God's presence, power, and glory, which exists invisibly alongside this visible realm, and from which God hears the prayers of his children. (*1 Kings 8:27–30; Psalm 11:4; Isaiah 66:1; Matthew 18:10; John 3:31; Ephesians 4:10; Hebrews 9:24; Revelation 21:1–2*)

171. How does your Father in heaven help you here on earth?

Because God is in all places and knows all things, he hears and answers my prayers, directs my paths, and strengthens me in times of trouble. (*2 Samuel 22; Psalms 23; 46; Matthew 6:6–8, 25–34; 7:9–11; James 1:5*)

**THE FIRST PETITION:
“HALLOWED BE THY NAME”**

172. What is the first petition?

The first petition is “Hallowed be thy Name.” (*Matthew 6:9; see also Psalms 99:3; 105:1–3; John 12:27–28; see questions 283–89*)

173. What is God's Name?

God's Name reveals who he is—his nature, his character, his power, and his purposes. The Name God reveals to Moses is “I AM WHO I AM” or simply “I AM” (*Exodus 3:6, 14*). This Name means that he

THE FOURTH PETITION:
“GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD”

188. What is the fourth petition?

The fourth petition is “Give us this day our daily bread.” (*Matthew 6:11; see also Luke 11:3*)

189. Having prayed first for God’s glory, kingdom, and will, what do you now pray?

I pray for my needs and those of my brothers and sisters: for daily provision, pardon for sins, and protection from evil. (*Psalms 25:16–18; 34:8–10; 71; Lamentations 2:19; Matthew 7:7–11; Philippians 4:6*)

190. What does “our daily bread” mean?

Daily bread includes all that we need each day for our bodily provision and spiritual nourishment. (*Exodus 16:4; Psalm 105:39–42; Proverbs 30:7–9; John 6:1–14, 41–51; Philippians 4:19*)

191. Why should you pray for daily bread?

God calls me to trust him for the needs of each day, to be concerned for the needs of others, to be content with what I have, and to grow in gratitude for his provision. (*Exodus 16; Psalm 78:15–20; Matthew 6:25–34; James 4:2–3*)

192. Why does God give you daily bread?

God gives me daily bread because he is a good and loving Father, who gives good things to all his children, sustains us in life, and desires that we grow daily in his grace. (*Psalms 103:13–14; 104:27–30; Isaiah 40:11, 29–31; Matthew 7:9–11*)