

MEN'S RETREAT

Camp Wingmann

November 18 - 20, 2016



Fathered by God

Six Stages of a Man's Life

Introductory Prayers:

Leader: Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Men: **And Blessed be his Kingdom forever and ever. Amen.**

Leader: The prophet Jeremiah speaks the Word of the Lord and says: “I set you among my sons and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful in all the nations. And I thought you would call me, ‘My Father,’ and would not turn from following me.” Jeremiah 3:19 RSV

Exhortation by Priest:

God wants to Father us, and he does Father us, and we pray today that we put ourselves in a posture, a place where we allow God to Father us. In these prayers we admit that we are unfinished men, partial men, sometimes only boys in the bodies of men. But today we repent. We turn from our independence; we turn to God who is a Father who shows up, and loves us, and tests us, and fights against evil with us, and teaches us what love really means.

Today we repent from seeking lives that are apart from God. We seek the genuine strength, wisdom and kindness that comes from God our Father. We re-frame the way that we think about our lives. We re-frame the ways we relate to other men. And for those here who are biological fathers or mentors to younger people, we re-think the ways we serve them as instruments of God’s blessing and peace. God the Father extends an offer to you. For the Lord says:

“I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” 2 Corinthians 6:18 (RSV)

You are the son of a kind, strong and engaged Father, a father wise enough to guide you in the way, generous enough to provide for your journey, offering to walk with you every step. Let us pray for the grace to turn back to the Father with this image in mind:

“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’” (The story of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15:21-24 RSV)

Prayer for Me to Return to God as Father (Let us pray.)

I need a Father. There is much in me that needs Fathering. I don’t want to live Fatherless anymore. Come to me. You have taken me home through Christ to be your own son. I accept that. I give my life back to you. Father me. Father me. Amen.

Boyhood:

The boy knows God as a Father who loves him.

What we pray for: “Without the bedrock of affirmation, this core of assurance, a man will move unsteadily through the rest of his life, trying to prove his worth and earn belovedness through performance or achievement, through sex, or in a thousand other ways. Quite often he doesn’t know this is his search... A young place in his heart is yearning for something never received.” (p. 50 in [Fathered by God](#))¹

A wound, which is more than a curse, is to be asked to do something before you are ready. “You are the man of the house now,” can be crushing if the boy has not had time to mature in the loving safety of a father’s home. Sometimes the need is to learn how to play again, knowing that it is OK to simply have fun and know that you are safe and loved.

“When Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and alighting on him; and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:16-17
RSV

Prayer for the Healing of the Boy in Me:

Father I need to know that I am your son, and that there is a place for me in your heart that no one else can fill. I need to experience your love. Raise the orphaned boy in me. Take me back to those places where I felt so missed, and show me that my heart matters to you. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear how you are raising the heart of the boy in me, raising me in belovedness even now. Heal and restore my soul as a son – as your beloved son. Give me the grace to believe it. Amen. (page 62 in [Fathered by God](#))

¹ [Fathered by God](#) by John Eldredge, Thomas Nelson, 2009.

Cowboy:

The cowboy knows God the Father as one who tests!

What we pray for: We are often driven men, because we are functional atheists. We tend to believe that we are “all alone” in this world and must “do it ourselves” if we are going to get it done. We also have a tendency to believe that we create our own adventure. Both are wrong. God the Father leads us into the adventures he has for us. He also tests us to initiate us into mature men and make us stronger for the larger work he has for us.

“Until a man learns to deal with the fact that life is hard, he will spend his days chasing the wrong thing, using all his energies to make life comfortable, soft or nice and that is no way for a man to spend his life.” (p. 76 in [Fathered by God](#)) -- The masculine soul needs trials and adventures to bring a man to settled confidence.”

But at the same time, the testing and the adventure is not God. Sports are not God. Adventure is not God. Traveling and exploration are not God. They can be ways to help you experience testing and confidence that you can live with God and have fun in the world, but they are meant to be simply part of the journey with a God who tells you that, “you have what it takes.” They are meant to help you know that God provides for you when you “get to the end of your rope.”

“Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.” Matthew 10:16 RSV

Prayer for the Healing of the Cowboy in Me:

These are the questions we ask ourselves: *How much of my life have I been misinterpreting? How many things have I just written off as hassle or “life is hard,” or even as warfare, when in fact God was in it, in the difficulty, wanting to test me and to Father me? Father, take me there. Take me back to things that were lost, or unfinished, or never even started. Take me into the cowboy stage and do this work in my soul. Father me here. Give me eyes to see, both where you have been fathering me and I didn’t know it, and where you are testing and initiating me now, though I might be misinterpreting it. I want to be brave and true. I want strength and I want to offer it to others. Lead me on. Amen.* (p. 85 in [Fathered by God](#), with slight changes)

Warrior:

The warrior knows God as the King he serves.

What we pray for: Quite simply we pray that we are serving the right King and that we make Jesus Lord of our life. We also pray to fight against the right things. We renounce “Satan and all the forces of wickedness that rebel against God.” We further renounce, “the evil powers of this world which corrupt and destroy the creatures of God.” And finally we renounce and fight against, “all sinful desires that draw us from the love of God.”

We ask our Lord to give us an understanding of the battlefield of life. And we ask Him to put us in the fight. We also recognize that our battles involve all the everyday parts of life, but that at their core, these are spiritual battles and that our very hearts are at stake in the conflict.

Our Father is a warrior, because there is a great contest between good and evil in this world. The cross and resurrection of our Lord and Brother Jesus Christ has shown us the end of the war. We know the future: God wins! But the battles are not yet over. And we take our places in battle and draw strength from Jesus’ cross and resurrection, knowing that we will die with Christ, so that we can share in the final triumph of his resurrection.

“Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:10-13 RSV)

Prayer for the Healing of the Warrior in Me:

Father, you are a great Warrior, and I am made in your image. I am your son, and a warrior too. Open my eyes to see how you have been developing the warrior in me. Show me where I’ve misinterpreted what has been happening in my life. Give me the strength and resolve to rise up and accept my warrior training. And when I am losing heart, give me your grace and encouragement to hang in there, all the way through to victory. In Jesus name, Amen. (p. 122 in Fathered by God)

Lover: The lover knows God as his intimate One.

What we pray for: We pray for the proper ordering of our “loves.” Men easily confuse erotic love and friendship love and divine love. Often when one kind of love is broken in our lives through a broken relationship with a woman, for example, or perhaps through the betrayal of a friend, then our hearts harden like cement and we become emotionally and spiritually unable to love in any way. So in the first place, we pray for the healing of our hearts from past “heart-break,” so that we can love at all. We also pray that we might be able to properly love women.

“No woman wants to be analyzed, and many marriages fail, because the man insists on treating her as a problem to be solved, rather than a mystery to be known and loved.” (p.132 in Fathered by God)

Robert Bly writes about how we as men tend to objectify women by chasing after the idea of a woman rather than relating to a flesh and blood creature meant to be a friend and companion and lover. He calls this “chasing after the golden haired woman.” Lots of men get addicted to images of women with pornography or by seeking “trophy wives” and never really learn how to love an actual woman. So we pray God will help us repent of viewing women as objects. For those who have wives or girlfriends: Lord help each man love the woman in his life as a person and not as an object.

There is a tendency in men to put “sexual love” or “friendship love” in the place of God’s love. But the deepest intimacy a man can experience is neither in sex nor in friendship. The deepest intimacy is in the beauty and peace and closeness we feel to God.

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:7-10 RSV

Prayers for the Healing of the Lover in Me:

For Healing of Heartbreak:

Father God, awaken the lover in me. Stir my heart. Romance me. Take me back into the story of love in my life, and show me where I lost heart. Show me where I have chosen safety over and against coming alive. Show me where deep repentance needs to take place. Heal the lover heart in me. Awaken me. Amen. (p. 145 in Fathered by God)

For Freedom from the Slavery to “The Golden Haired Beauty”

Where God and the Devil Do Battle for your Heart In the Swamps of Temptation and Lust

O merciful God, come to me in this place, this very place in my heart. I give this to you. I choose you over Eve (and making women objects). I choose your love and friendship and beauty. I give my aching and longing and vulnerable heart to you. Come, and heal me here. Sanctify me. Make me whole and holy in this very place. Amen. (p. 151 in Fathered by God)

For Healing Lover Brokenness:

Father, I have so much to learn here. Teach me to be a lover. Open the eyes of my heart to all the ways you have been romancing me. Remind what awakened my heart when I was young. Show me how you are wooing me even now. I give my heart to you. Heal the wounded lover in me. Forgive me all my sins and failures here. Come, and lead me in deep repentance and restoration. Teach me to love with a whole heart. Amen. (p. 153 in Fathered by God)

King: The king knows God as his trusted friend.

What we pray for: We pray that we use power and influence in humility and not in pride. We pray that we use the resources we preside over for the benefit of others. A true king in the service of the Father knows that privilege and resources are not for his own comfort.

“The posture of the heart in a mature man is *reluctance to take the throne, but a willingness to do it on behalf of others.*” (p. 175 in Fathered by God)

“When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.” Galatians 4:4-7 RSV

“Jesus said to all, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake, he will save it. For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?” Luke 9:23-25 RSV

“A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.” Luke 22:24-26 RSV

Prayer for the Healing of the King in Me:

Father raise the king in me! Develop in me the heart of a king. Help me to rule well, in your name. Teach me to be a good king, like Jesus. Help me to rule well right where I am. But above all else, teach me to live as your friend. Open my heart to the ways you are speaking to me, and leading me. Show me how to cultivate an even deeper relationship with you, to be one with you, even as Jesus is one with you in all things. Amen. (p. 184 from Fathered by God)

Sage: The sage has a deep communion with God

Your Personal Notes:

What we pray for: We pray against “fading away with age.” Those who are younger pray for the grace to look to our elder men for wisdom. Those who are older pray to see God’s hand and presence in their long life experience, so that they have wisdom to share. We all seek God’s wisdom and God’s real presence in our lives. A man’s chief end, according to the Westminster Shorter Catechism is to “glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” We pray as men to live into this vision and to share it and to know that we abide in the Father through Jesus Christ.

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:7-11 RSV

Prayer for the Healing of the Sage in Me:

Everyone says together: Father, I need you now. I need you to the end of my days. I ask you to raise the Sage in me. Help me to become a man of genuine wisdom and compassion. Show me the Sages you have for me both living and dead. Help me find them and sit at their feet.

For men older than age 62: Show me the men and women who need my counsel, and show me how to pursue them. Speak to me, Father. Stir the Fire in my heart. Show me what my contribution is now to be, and Father me into making it with all my heart.

And everyone says: Amen.

(p. 206 from Fathered by God)

