Children Are His Reward

SCRIPTURE

“Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.” — Psalm 127:3 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Before Elijah was born, our family knew life was about to change. We were excited, but we could not see exactly what the next season would look like. Every child brings that mixture of joy and uncertainty. A baby rearranges schedules, interrupts sleep, stretches resources, and changes the shape of a home. Yet Scripture does not describe children as burdens to manage. It calls them an heritage and a reward from the Lord. That truth corrects the way our culture often measures a blessed life. We are taught to value convenience, control, and independence. Children bring us into a world where very little is convenient or controllable. They require time, sacrifice, patience, and presence. But in the giving of ourselves, God gives us something greater: a living glimpse of His own heart. Parenthood moves theology from the head to the heart. The love that rises within a mother or father - the desire to protect, provide, comfort, and delight in a child - helps us understand something about the One in whose image we were made. We do not make God a Father by calling Him one. He is the Father from whom every true expression of parental love derives its meaning. The joys and sacrifices of parenthood can help us appreciate His love for us.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for the gift of children and for the lessons Your love teaches through them. Deliver me from valuing convenience more than people. Help me receive every life You place near me as a sacred trust and a blessing from You. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Psalm 127:3–5
- Mark 10:13–16
- Ephesians 6:4
- Psalm 16:8–11
- Luke 15:11–24

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does recognizing children as God's gift change our responsibilities toward them?

2. Read Psalm 127:3–5. How does this passage deepen today's understanding of God's work in our lives?

3. What would it look like for you to give a child or young person intentional encouragement?

Run to the Father

SCRIPTURE

“Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” — Psalm 16:11 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

One afternoon I was outside watering my trees and bushes while my daughter Heidi played nearby. She edged closer to the water, so I gave her a quick spray. She laughed and asked me to do it again - and again. Then she ran toward the garden to see a funny-looking cucumber, only to turn around and race back toward me. As I watched her running, joy flooded over me. I started smiling. She saw my smile and smiled back. Of course, she wanted to be sprayed again, but the moment showed me something deeper: our heavenly Father delights when His children run to Him. We sometimes approach God as though He merely tolerates us. We imagine Him standing at a distance, arms folded, waiting for us to improve before He welcomes us. But Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father.” The Father is not reluctant to receive His children. His presence is the path of life and the place of fullness of joy. Notice that the joy moved in both directions. I delighted to see my child coming, and she delighted to be with me. That is the fellowship God desires with us. Prayer is more than presenting a list of needs. It is running home. Worship is more than fulfilling a duty. It is seeing the Father's face and discovering that He is glad we came. What has caused you to keep your distance? Shame, disappointment, busyness, or fear may tell you to stay away. Do not listen. Turn around and run toward your Father. His presence is not a reward for those who have everything together; it is the place where His children learn the path of life.

PRAYER

Father, teach me to run to You instead of hiding from You. Quiet every lie that makes me doubt Your welcome. Let me see Your delight, rest in Your love, and learn to trust You with the confidence of a child who knows his father loves him. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Psalm 16:8–11
- Luke 15:11–24
- Hebrews 4:16
- Psalm 127:3–5
- Mark 10:13–16

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the Father's welcome teach us about running to Him rather than hiding?

2. Consider Psalm 16:8–11. What does this passage add to the main lesson of today's devotional?

3. What would it look like for you to bring a fear or failure honestly to the Father?

He Feels Our Sorrow

SCRIPTURE

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” — Psalm 103:13 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

My daughter Haley loves animals, especially rabbits. Her efforts to begin raising mini lop bunnies have brought some funny surprises and some painful disappointments. I have watched her hopes rise and fall, and her sadness has affected me because a parent's heart hurts when a child's heart hurts. One memory is especially difficult. We were caring for a rabbit named Daisy when dogs broke into the cage and killed her. As Haley realized what had happened, she cried out in grief. Seeing her sorrow crushed me. I could not remove what had happened, but I could enter into her pain. Her tears mattered to me because she mattered to me. If an imperfect earthly father can feel that kind of compassion, how much more does our heavenly Father care when His children suffer? Psalm 103 does not present God as cold or detached. He pities His children. He remembers our frame and knows our weakness. He does not shame us for grieving or tell us that our pain is too small to bring before Him. Compassion means more than noticing another person's pain. It means allowing that pain to touch your own heart. God is not a distant observer of your hardest moments. When you mourn, He is near. When you are disappointed, He is not impatient with your tears. His strength does not make Him less tender; it makes His tenderness safe. Today, bring your sorrow honestly to the Father. You do not need polished words. A child in pain simply cries out, trusting that a loving parent will come near. Let that be your prayer. And as the Father comforts you, ask Him to make you compassionate toward someone whose heart is hurting.

PRAYER

Father, thank You that my grief is never hidden from You. Meet me in the places that hurt, and help me trust Your compassion. Give me a tender heart that enters the sorrow of others and carries Your comfort to them. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Psalm 103:8–14
- Isaiah 63:9
- John 11:32–36
- Psalm 16:8–11
- Luke 15:11–24

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does the Father's compassion change our understanding of His response to suffering?

2. How does Psalm 103:8–14 help clarify the spiritual principle in today's reading?

3. What would it look like for you to listen compassionately to someone who is hurting?

Love Took Our Place

SCRIPTURE

“Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows... But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” — Isaiah 53:4-5 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Parents who watch a child suffer often feel the same desperate desire: “I would take your place if I could.” Love does not want to remain comfortable while the beloved is in pain. It would rather bear the wound itself than stand at a safe distance and watch. That instinct helps us understand the gospel. Christ did not remain in the comfort of heaven while humanity suffered under sin and moved toward the second death. He came near. He entered our world, bore our griefs, carried our sorrows, and took upon Himself the judgment our sins deserved. The cross is not the act of an indifferent God who needed to be persuaded to care. It is the revelation of the Father's heart through His Son. Jesus said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” In Christ we see divine compassion moving all the way into our suffering. God did not merely send advice. He gave His Son. This means you never have to wonder whether God understands the cost of pain. Jesus was despised, rejected, wounded, and acquainted with grief. He knows what betrayal feels like. He knows loneliness, weariness, injustice, and loss. Even more, He carried the weight of sin so that you would not have to face its final consequence alone. When guilt tells you to hide, look to the One who took your place. When pain tells you that God is far away, look again at Calvary. The cross declares that the Father's love is not passive. It comes after His children, enters their sorrow, and pays the price to bring them home.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for loving me enough to give Your Son. Lord Jesus, thank You for bearing my griefs, carrying my sorrows, and taking my place. Help me rest in Your redeeming love and show that same self-giving compassion to others. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Isaiah 53:4–6
- Romans 5:6–8
- 1 Peter 2:24
- Psalm 103:8–14
- Isaiah 63:9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does Christ bearing our sorrows reveal about divine love?
2. Read Isaiah 53:4–6. What connection do you see between this passage and today's Scripture?
3. What would it look like for you to respond to Christ's sacrifice with a practical act of self-giving love?

Bring the Children to Jesus

SCRIPTURE

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.” — Mark 10:14–15 (excerpt) (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Jesus was teaching crowds, healing the sick, and answering serious theological challenges when people brought children to Him. The disciples decided this was a distraction. They rebuked those who came, as if Jesus had more important ministry to do. Mark tells us that Jesus was “much displeased.” He was indignant. The disciples had badly misunderstood both His heart and His kingdom. The children they treated as interruptions were exactly the ones Jesus wanted brought near. He took them in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them. We can repeat the disciples' mistake. We may treat children's ministry as childcare - something that keeps little ones occupied while adults attend to the “important” spiritual work. But Jesus placed children in the center of kingdom instruction. Their souls matter now, not merely when they become old enough to join an adult conversation. To bring children to Jesus requires more than providing a program. It means showing them what He is like. They need adults who listen, pray, teach truth patiently, apologize sincerely, keep promises, and make room for questions. They need to see that church is a family, not merely an event or a building. You may not be a parent, but you can still help bring children to Christ. Encourage a tired mother or father. Learn a child's name. Support families in practical ways. Speak words that help young hearts see the goodness of God. Do not stand at the door like the disciples. Open the way, because Jesus is still saying, “Let them come.”

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, forgive me for overlooking those You welcome. Give me Your heart for children and families. Show me how to make room, offer support, teach with patience, and help the next generation come freely into Your presence. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Mark 10:13–16
- Matthew 18:5–6
- Deuteronomy 6:6–9
- Isaiah 53:4–6
- Romans 5:6–8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can adults unintentionally hinder children from coming to Jesus?

2. What encouragement or instruction does Mark 10:13–16 offer in light of today's devotional?

3. What would it look like for you to make an opportunity for a child to experience Scripture and welcome?

Become as a Little Child

SCRIPTURE

“Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” — Matthew 18:3 (KJV)

DEVOTIONAL

Many of us want to enter the kingdom as adults: by mastering every argument, understanding every doctrine, and proving that we can manage our spiritual lives. Truth matters, but Jesus said we must be converted and become as little children. We must surrender our pride and learn to trust our Heavenly Father with the humble dependence of a child.

A little child who trusts his father does not have to understand every detail of the day before he is willing to take his hand. He trusts the person who is leading him. The Christian experience is not a rejection of understanding; it is the willingness to trust our Father even when our understanding is incomplete.

It is possible to possess a great deal of biblical knowledge and yet have very little of that childlike trust. Jesus calls us away from self-sufficiency and into a living relationship with God. When you face a difficulty today, do not carry it as though everything depends upon you. Bring it to your Heavenly Father. Let the assurance of His love teach you to trust and obey Him.

PRAYER

Father, convert my heart and make me childlike before You. Break my self-reliance, awaken my wonder, and help me forgive freely. Teach me to receive Your kingdom with humble trust and to depend on You for everything. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Matthew 18:1–4
- Mark 10:15
- Psalm 131:1–2
- Mark 10:13–16
- Matthew 18:5–6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What distinguishes childlike faith from spiritual self-confidence?

2. How does Matthew 18:1–4 support or expand the lesson we have considered today?

3. What would it look like for you to approach God with simple trust and a willingness to learn?

Sabbath Summary & Reflection — BEARING THE FATHER'S NAME

SCRIPTURE

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.” — Revelation 14:1 (KJV)

SABBATH REFLECTION

This week we have seen the Father's heart through the gift of children, the joy of welcome, the tenderness of compassion, the sacrifice of Christ, and the childlike faith that receives the kingdom. Together, they reveal the character God intends to reproduce in His people. As my daughter Hannah has grown, I have noticed ways she thinks, responds, jokes, and speaks like me. Sometimes the resemblance is so obvious that the family answers her by saying, “Okay, Matt.” There is a special joy in seeing your own character reflected in your child. In a far greater way, our Father desires to see Himself in us. Revelation pictures God's people bearing the Father's name in their foreheads. His name represents more than a label; it points to His character settled in the mind and expressed in the life. Malachi also looks toward a restoration in which hearts are turned - fathers to children and children to fathers. The preparation God seeks is not merely information about final events. It is the restoration of His loving character in homes, churches, and relationships.

Reflect: Where did you most clearly see the Father's heart this week - in His welcome, compassion, sacrifice, patience, or delight?

Examine: Does your home and church life make it easier for children and families to come to Jesus?

Practice: Choose one way to reflect the Father today: listen without rushing, forgive an old hurt, encourage a parent, bless a child, or run to God in simple dependence.

Prophecy should not merely make us informed; it should make us like our Father. Let Sabbath rest remind you that you are His child before you are His worker. Receive His love, then carry His character into the coming week.

PRAYER

Father, thank You for revealing Your heart to me. Write Your name upon my mind and reproduce Your character in my life. Turn the hearts of families toward one another, make our churches places where children are welcomed, and teach me to live as Your beloved child. Amen.

FURTHER STUDY / ADDITIONAL BIBLE READING

- Revelation 14:1–5
- Exodus 34:6–7
- Matthew 5:44–48
- Matthew 18:1–4
- Mark 10:15

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How can the Father's character become visible in our relationships?

2. How does Revelation 14:1–5 bring together the spiritual lessons of this week?

3. What would it look like for you to choose one way to reflect His welcome, compassion or patience this Sabbath?