



# The Advent of Joy

December 17-23, 2023

## **MAIN POINT**

In Jesus, we find a father who pursues us with unending and redeeming love, creating a joy in us that the world can't give.

## **INTRODUCTION**

**What is your favorite memory of your father or someone who was a father figure to you?**

Fathers are incredibly influential in our lives. Even if a father is absent, it can change the course of a child's life. Sadly, many of us have wounds from our fathers that have never fully healed. Our fathers loom large in our lives, to the point that we are even tempted to think of God as just a bigger, more powerful version of our earthly fathers. But this is totally backwards. God, our Everlasting Father, is far greater than you can ever imagine and redeems us where our earthly father failed. Having Him as our Everlasting Father, swells us with love, hope and most of all, a joy that all believers understand.

**Watch Session 3: Everlasting Father (11 minutes).**

## **DISCUSSION**

We are all deeply influenced by our fathers, for good and for bad. Our relationship, or lack of a relationship, with our fathers influences our view of God, the Everlasting Father. We often project the hurts and hang-ups we received from our earthly fathers onto God. But, as J.D. taught, we need to flip that perspective. Instead of seeing God as a heavenly version of our earthly fathers, we need to see our earthly fathers—in their faults and in their goodness—as flawed representatives of our Everlasting Father.

**What is/was your earthly father like?**

**What kind of relationship did you have with your father as a child? As an adult?**

**In what ways do you want to be like your earthly father?**

**What do you wish you could change about your earthly father?**

The good news we find in Jesus is that our heavenly Father is far greater than our earthly fathers. Even the best father is just a shadow of who God is as our Father. J.D. mentioned a few different types of fathers in the video, each one very unlike our Everlasting Father.

1) The first type of earthly father J.D. discussed was the Never Satisfied Dad. This type of father is a task master, a father whose expectations we can never meet.

**In what ways have you viewed God as a task master?**

**If you see God as a "Never Satisfied Dad", what do you think he sees when he looks**

at you?

Our Everlasting Father is not holding a list of our failures, shortcomings, and unmet to-dos. To show us an accurate picture, J.D. referenced Zephaniah 3:17:

“The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.”

**Instead of piling work and expectations on to you, God “quiets you with love.”  
In what ways does this verse shape your perspective of God?**

2) We might also see God as a Time-Bomb Dad, slow to show affection and quick anger.  
**If you see God as a Time-Bomb Dad, what do you think God wants from you?**

God is not a Time-Bomb Dad, ready to blow up when we don't meet his expectations. God, your Father, looks for ways to love you. J.D. used Psalm 23:6 to show us what God's love looks like: “Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

You don't have to fearfully avoid God. He does not follow you with judgment and simmering anger. His eager love should make us want to be with him with unmeasurable joy, rather than hide from him.

**What does it mean to you that God's love is characterized by goodness and mercy?**

3) The third type of father J.D. talked about was the Emotionally Distant Dad, the kind of father who was around your whole life, but you never were close to. We were made to feel that he was too busy for us or that we were not a priority in his life.

**What do you think God's priorities are?**

God loves us so much that he could not stand being separated from us. He sent his Son to die in our place so that we might spend eternity with him. What joy! God actively works to be near and known by you.

**In what ways have you sought to be near and known by our Everlasting Father?**

**How does this understanding of Him bring about peace, hope and Joy?**

4) The final earthly father J.D. taught on was the Absent Father. This father left us with a life soundtrack of rejection and unimportance.

**When you think about your own life's soundtrack, what does it say about you?**

**What does it say when you meet your goals? What does it say when you fail?**

Jesus is our Everlasting Father. Jesus did not abandon us when we—his enemies—killed him. Our sin rested on his shoulders and he did not walk away. Even death cannot separate us from him. You are more important to Jesus than you can imagine.

**What does it mean to you that Jesus is your Everlasting Father?**

Just knowing and understanding that probably puts a joyful smile on your face. It does mine.

## **BIBLE EXPLORATION**

Read the parable of the prodigal son in [Luke 15:11-32](#).

If you grew up in church, you have probably heard or read this parable before. This time, let's focus on the father and his love for his wayward son.

**What surprises you about the love of the father in this parable?**

In verses 18–19, the younger son practices an apology he plans on giving to his father.

**Have you ever practiced an apology before asking your father's (or your father figure's) forgiveness? What worried you about approaching him?**

**How did he react to confession and repentance?**

In verses 20–23 the father does not wait for the son's apology before kissing him and welcoming him home. In fact, he does not even let the son finish his apology and orders a feast of celebration in his son's honor.

**According to verse 24, what is going through the father's head?**

This parable is Jesus's picture of God's love for us. Our Father rushes out to meet us with love and celebration.

**In what ways do you feel like you have to earn God's love or make him appreciate you?**

**What joy does it give you knowing God loves you and simply wants you to "come home"?**

This is the only parable where Jesus does not end with an application. This parable is meant to make us recognize God's love for us as a restored son or daughter. We are meant to sit in awe of God's great love for us.

## **LAST WORD**

It is easy to think that God is like our earthly fathers or father figures. But that perspective is backwards; on their best day, our fathers are hazy pictures of the majesty of our Everlasting Father. God is not distant. He is not angry. He is not waiting for us to get our act together.

God, your Father, loves you deeply. He wants to be with you. He sent Jesus so that you might call him Father and be called his son, his daughter. He is your Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, giver of hope and joy.

## **LIVE IT OUT**

**READ:** Read [Luke 15:11–32](#). J.D. pointed out that this is the only parable without an application. As a result, we are simply meant to "behold" our loving father. As you read this passage, make a note of everything the father does so that you might "behold" all of his goodness.

**PRAY:** Pray that God would show you his goodness as your heavenly Father. Ask that his love might be shown to you as you seek to know him more closely, giving you overwhelmingly apparent joy.

**MEMORIZE:** Memorize [1 John 3:1a](#), "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."