



THE
MENTORING
PROJECT

GROWING UP WITHOUT A DAD



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Growing Up Without a Dad

Introduction

If you've grown up without a dad, you will know how difficult it can be and the deep impact it can have on your life. It can make you feel lonely and insecure and even question your worth and identity. When a father is present in your life, he can bring guidance and support; when that is missing, something will always feel out of place.

The Bible, on the other hand, reminds us that God is the perfect father, who will never leave you, fail you, and never stop loving His children. Psalm 68:5 states, "*He is a father to the fatherless.*" If you do not have a dad figure in your life, God fills in the gap regardless of what's missing in your relationships.

It's not an easy feat to learn how to deal with pain, heal, trust, and find refuge and solace in someone, especially in this journey. This guide will show us what it truly means to grow in faith, nurture healthy relationships, and experience the love of God as a Father.

Understanding the Father Wound

Key Scripture: Psalm 68:5

"A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling."

Impact of Father's Absence on Identity and Psychological Growth

To grow up with only a picture of a father on the wall instead of a physical one is quite devastating. The void left behind is more complex than simply not having someone to play catch with. Fathers contribute love, care, and support, but when this is taken away, it is difficult to deal with.

Maybe you've felt it firsthand. The feeling that something important was missing. The struggle to feel secure in who you are. The question—*Was I not worth sticking around for? Am I enough?*

These emotions cannot be ignored because they are real and do not just fade away as you get older. The absence of a father can create a lasting impact on various aspects of your life, from identity to confidence and even emotional well-being. But the good news is that you are not alone because God is there by your side. He can see, understand, and even heal whatever you have going on.

What is the Meaning of "Father Wound"?

"Father wound" refers to the emotional and psychological effects of a father's absence. That can be his physical, emotional, or spiritual absence. A father wound is formed when a father leaves by choice or situation. Even if he is physically present, the father's wound can still develop if he is emotionally distant, neglectful, abusive, or is simply not there for you as a child.

As we see in Psalm 68:5, God is *"a father to the fatherless."* No matter what torment we have received from an earthly father, God makes up for it by being there for us.

When a deep wound forms, it is usually due to the father being absent to meet these needs. Trying to deal with the absence can distort the way a person sees themselves, others, or God. But to truly experience His healing, we first have to understand the effects of a father's absence.

How A Father's Absence May Impact One's Identity

In identity formation, fathers play an important role. They help us understand our identity, our values, and how to orient ourselves in life. Without a father, these fundamental parts are unsteady. People who grow up without a father figure often struggle with:

Self-esteem: You can feel unnoticed or unimportant.

Ability to make decisions: Heavy encouragement from fathers builds self-confidence. Without it, insecurity creeps in.

Direction – Fathers help guide their children into adulthood. Many people lack direction and face uncertainty about their future if they do not have a father figure in their lives.

Not having a father figure can cause a person to search for validation, acceptance, or something that will complete them. This might cause some people to engage in toxic relationships, self-destructive behaviors, or go to great lengths to seek validation.

God tells us a different truth. In Him, we are called chosen, loved, and valuable—not because of our actions but because of our identity.

The Emotional Toll of a Father's Absence

Beyond identity, a father's absence also takes a toll on emotional health.

Feelings of Rejection

Even if a father didn't leave intentionally, it can still feel personal. *Why wasn't I worth staying for?* These ideas may affect other relationships by cultivating an intense fear of being rejected.

Trusting others can be difficult.

An absent or inconsistent father can cause problems with trusting other people. Relationships may feel unsafe due to the fear of being abandoned.

Anger or Resentment Issues

Pain can lead to unresolved issues such as anger—directed toward an absent father. These feelings won't fade on their own over time.

They need healing. And that healing starts with bringing our wounds to God—the only Father who will never leave, never fail, and never stop loving us.

Not Letting Your Pain Define Who You Are

It is easy to let pain impact how you view yourself. If a father is absent, it can feel as if a part of your identity is lost too. You may deal with emotions like feeling rejected, lacking self-confidence, or even becoming furious out of the blue.

But it's important to remember that your pain does not determine who you are.

Your past does not define you. Yes, it shaped you. Yes, it hurts. But it doesn't have to control your future. God's love is bigger than your pain. And irrespective of what you lacked in your earthly relationships, He is the Father who will always be by your side.

Suffering Changes You, But It Doesn't Determine Your Path in Life

Your experiences will affect you in some way, shape, or form as you go through life, and a missing father figure can lead to some emotional injury that needs time to heal.

Perhaps your childhood required you to prove yourself because no one was there to guide you. Perhaps trust was your greatest hurdle due to abandonment. Maybe suffering taught you to bottle up your feelings because vulnerability equals weakness, shame, and defeat. These reactions are normal. Pain changes us. But it doesn't have to become our identity.

Your worth is not determined by who was absent—it is determined by the One who has always been present. God created you with a purpose. He calls you His child. You are not broken beyond repair. You are loved beyond measure.

The Lies Pain Tells Us

When we are hurt deeply, especially at a young age, our minds start making up stories to justify it. These stories often turn into lies that we believe about ourselves.

Maybe you've believed:

- Because my father didn't stay, I tell myself I don't deserve love.
- I have to be strong all the time because nobody will take care of me.
- I will never be enough.
- I have to succeed to prove my worth.

These lies feel real, but they are not the truth. Hear God's Word to get a different perspective.

Psalm 139:14 says, *"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*

You have not been forgotten. You are not unwanted. You are intentionally created by God, and nothing that has happened to you can take that away.

Healing Begins With Truth

If you've been carrying the weight of fatherlessness, know this: Healing is possible.

It doesn't mean forgetting what happened. It doesn't mean pretending the pain wasn't real. It means surrendering that pain to God and letting Him rewrite your story.

Healing starts when you replace lies with truth.

Do not say *"I'm unworthy,"* say *"I am loved by God"* (Jeremiah 31:3).

Do not say *"I'll never be enough,"* say *"I am chosen and set apart"* (1 Peter 2:9).

Do not say *"I have to do life alone,"* say *"God is my ever-present help"* (Psalm 46:1).

Once you start looking at yourself through God's lens, you stop thinking about yourself in relation to your shortcomings and instead think about yourself in relation to who He says you are.

Escape The Shackles of Your Past

You are right. Letting go of suffering isn't simple. It's something that you are used to. Oftentimes, it even seems like it is part of your identity. But God has never wished for you to suffer alone.

Perhaps you've been overlooking affection because the fear of getting hurt is looming over you. Maybe you are holding onto anger toward your father. You have also been trying to over-achieve and prove your worth to others or yourself.

Every time you decide to surrender that suffering to God, you set yourself closer to the state of feeling liberated.

Isaiah 61:3 says that God gives *"a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair."*

Do not let your past define you because God can take what was broken and make it whole.

Your Story Has Just Begun

Your ongoing problems feel like they will bind you for an eternity because you started life without a father. Thus, it always makes you feel incomplete.

But God specializes in redemption.

Many people in the Bible experienced deep pain but did not let it define them:

- Moses was abandoned as a baby but became a leader.
- Joseph was rejected by his brothers but was later used to save an entire nation.
- David was disregarded, but still referred to as a man after God's own heart.

Your struggle is not the end of your story. With time, God will help you shape, strengthen, and even support others who are going through similar situations.

Learning to Trust Again

The most challenging part about growing up without a father is learning how to trust—trusting people, love, and even God.

When someone fails to show up when they are meant to be there, it can alter their perception of reliability. While this is reasonable, the healing process begins when you understand that God is not like the people who have disappointed you time and time again.

Deuteronomy 31:8 says, *“The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

God is constant. He is present. He does not leave.

Learning to trust Him is a process. It takes time. Once you start leaning on Him, you will realize that He is the Father you need.

Discussion: How Difficult Is It to Grow Up Without a Father?

1. Which emotions did you suffer with because of an absent father?
2. How did it affect your self-image?
3. What lies did you accept and in what ways did they replace God's truth?
4. How to let go of the pain so that you can start your healing process?

Life without a father can be very difficult, but it should not define you. Your self-worth is not based on what you did not have growing up and it is not your fault, but it depends on who is by your side right now.

God the Father sees your pain, understands your struggles, and is ready to heal every damaged part of you. So, today, take a step toward freedom. Let go of the lies. Hold onto God's truth. Choose to believe that your story is not over—because with God, the best is yet to come.

God as Our Perfect Father

Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 6:18

"I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Finding Security in a Father Who Never Leaves

For all those who did not have a father growing up, it can be difficult to trust people. That is because a father is supposed to protect, love, and guide you till you grow up. But when that support is missing, it can leave a permanent void.

Perhaps you have personally experienced the pain of needing someone to support you and feeling as if you can never be truly safe. Along with the deafening thoughts that say: If my dad didn't stick around, what makes me think anyone else will?

It's really simple to believe that God is just an alternate version of the father you never had, but He is very different from that.

God can not physically walk away or disappoint you the way earthly fathers do. Unlike a father who sets an example and conditions on 'loving you,' He proclaims you His 'son' or 'daughter.' Not as an award to be earned through great deeds but because you are a part of His family.

That's why 2 Corinthians 6:18 is such a powerful promise—*"I will be a Father to you."* Not *I might be*, not *if you prove yourself*, but I will be.

This means you will never feel like you lost anything because God will fill in all those gaps.

God's Love Is Steady and Unchanging

One of the hardest parts of growing up without a father is dealing with inconsistency. Maybe your father was absent completely. Maybe he was there but emotionally distant. Maybe he came and went, leaving you unsure of where you stood.

That kind of instability teaches a dangerous lie—that love is unreliable. That people leave when you need them most. That at any moment, what little security you have might disappear.

But God's love is different.

In Psalm 136:26, we're reminded: *"Give thanks to the God of heaven. His love endures forever."*

That means His love isn't temporary. It doesn't fade. It doesn't walk away. It does not depend on your actions either way. When He speaks of being your Father, know that He means it eternally.

A Father Who Guides and Protects

Guidance, teaching, and protection always come from a father, always. While saying “You got this” to a kid, a father’s role involves correction and guiding. A kid needs his/her father to guide and teach Him. Consider life as a roadmap that needs guidance, or else it gets quite perplexing and dull. Turns become a guessing game, and your purpose becomes a question mark.

If only there were someone who showed how to deal with relationships, told children how to manage their responsibilities, and challenged them head-on without any form of fear. God does all of that.

In Isaiah 41:10, He says: *“Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”*

He is not distant. He is involved. He guides you through His Word, prayer, and the different people He sends into your life. Whenever you happen to find yourself stranded, He is the one that you can seek help from. You will not have to go through life alone.

Healing from Father Wounds Through God’s Love

It’s not easy to trust a father figure when your experience with fatherhood has been painful. Maybe you put up barriers so that no one, including God, can get too close. Maybe you have managed to trick yourself into believing that a father figure is something you do not need. But healing begins when you allow God to fill that space.

It starts with letting go of the past. Stop ignoring it or pretending it did not hurt, but choose to trust in God and let him hear you.

Psalms 147:3 says, *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”*

That includes father wounds.

When you allow God to be your Father, you will not have to carry your pain anymore. He takes it away from you while offering comfort and restoration.

Learning to Trust God as Your Father

Building your trust again takes time. If you struggle to trust people because of your past, understand this - God is patient with you.

Here’s how you can start leaning into His fatherhood:

Talk to Him Like a Father – Prayer isn't just about asking for things. It's about relationships. Share your deepest feelings with Him, whether that may be your fears, your frustrations, aspirations, or your dreams - Just like a child would do with a caring father.

Let His Words Define You – It's possible your father ignored you growing up or did not build you up, but God's Word speaks life over you. For sure, His words are full of truths about what you are. Focus on the verses that remind you of your value and His love.

Trust His Timing – The plans that God has for you might not be the ones you expect, but in the end, they will be meaningful. Always trust His greater reason. Even when life seems complicated and confusing. Like always, He knows it all.

Let Go of Comparison – Perhaps you see others with their strong father figures in life. And it makes you think, why can't I have that? But God provides what you need in His own way. Sometimes, it's through mentors, friends, or a church community.

Seeing Ourselves as Children of God

It's one thing to know that God is our Father. It's another thing to truly believe it.

For many people who grew up without a dad—or with a distant or hurtful one—accepting God as a Father doesn't come naturally. Maybe the word “father” brings up painful memories, or maybe it doesn't mean much at all because you never had that relationship to begin with.

But the Bible makes it clear: You are a child of God. Not just someone He created, not just someone He watches from a distance, but His son. His daughter.

That truth changes everything.

When we begin to see ourselves the way God sees us, it transforms our identity, our healing, and the way we move through life. We are no longer defined by our past, our wounds, or our feelings of being unwanted. We are defined by the unshakable, unchanging love of our heavenly Father.

You Belong to God

A father's role is to give identity, security, and love. When that is missing, it's easy to feel lost. Who am I? Where do I belong? Am I enough? These questions often linger in the hearts of those who grew up without a father.

But God answers those questions in a way no earthly father ever could.

In 1 John 3:1, it says, *“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!”*

This is not just a nice idea—it's the truth. You are not fatherless. You are not forgotten. God has already claimed you as His child. You don't have to earn it. You don't have to prove yourself.

You simply belong to Him.

God's Love Defines Us, Not Our Pain

Many people carry wounds from an absent father. Whether he left, was emotionally distant, or hurt you in some way, that absence creates a deep pain. But those are lies.

Your earthly father may have failed you, but your heavenly Father never will. His love is not based on your past. It is not based on whether you were wanted by your earthly dad.

You were wanted by God before you even took your first breath.

Psalm 139:13-14 says, *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."*

You are not an accident. You are not a mistake. You are God's beloved child.

Healing Through Knowing God as Father

When we truly believe that God is our Father, something amazing happens: healing begins.

The wounds left by an absent father may not disappear overnight, but when we rest in the truth of who we are in Christ, those wounds lose their power over us.

Healing starts when we:

- Let go of the lies that say we are unworthy.
- Stop searching for identity in things that will never satisfy you.
- Accept the love that God has been offering us all along.

Romans 8:15 says, *"The Spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him, we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"*

"Abba" is an intimate term for "Father." It's like saying "Dad" or "Daddy."

That is the kind of relationship God wants with you—not distant, not formal, but close, personal, and full of love.

Living as a Child of God

When you truly believe you are God's child, it changes how you live.

1. You Stop Striving for Approval

Many people with father wounds spend their lives trying to prove themselves—trying to be successful, trying to be perfect, trying to earn love.

But you don't have to prove yourself to God. He already loves you. You don't have to chase approval. You already have it.

2. You Walk in Confidence

When you know who you belong to, you stop living in fear. You stop worrying about whether you're good enough. You walk in the confidence that your heavenly Father is always with you.

3. You Trust That You Are Provided For

A good father provides for his children, and God does the same. He sees your needs. He knows your struggles. And He promises to take care of you.

Matthew 6:26 says, *"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"*

If God provides for the birds, how much more will He provide for you, His beloved child?

Discussion: How Can Knowing God as Father Bring Healing?

1. How has your experience with your earthly father shaped the way you see yourself?
2. What would it look like for you to fully embrace the truth that you are God's child?
3. What lies have you believed about yourself that need to be replaced with God's truth?
4. How can trusting God as Father bring healing to the wounds left by an absent earthly father?

Seeing yourself as a child of God changes everything. It means you are no longer defined by the wounds of your past. It means you are no longer searching for identity in things that will never satisfy you. It means you are already loved. You are already chosen. You already belong.

If you've struggled with the pain of fatherlessness, know this: God is enough. He is not just a replacement for what was missing. He is the Father you were always meant to have.

So today, choose to believe the truth. You are not abandoned. You are not alone. You are a child of the King. And nothing can ever take that away.

Overcoming Anger, Resentment, and Insecurity

Key Scripture: Ephesians 4:31-32

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

Carrying Anger and Hatred

Feeling angry is often a response to something painful. Anger always appears for the first time whenever someone we trust walks out on us, lets us down, or makes us feel worthless. It's so much simpler to feel angry than it is to feel sad. It's easier to build walls than to admit the pain.

But anger that is left unchecked does not just stay anger. It turns into resentment. It grows into bitterness. It creeps into every aspect of our lives, including how we perceive ourselves, treat other people, and even how we choose to trust God.

Perhaps you have experienced this directly. Perhaps you have experienced heat towards your missing father and deeply held the belief that he did not nurture you, provide for you, and did not love you like a father figure was supposed to. Maybe that anger has created problems in your relationships, making it difficult to trust other people, to be vulnerable, and to have hope that people actually want to be there for you. Anger is too volatile, and the worst part is that it can never stay contained.

It spreads. What starts as a wound from one person ends up shaping how we interact with everyone else. It becomes a filter through which we see the world. And instead of freeing us, it keeps us trapped.

Ephesians 4:31 tells us to *"get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger."* Not because the pain wasn't real. Not because what happened doesn't matter. But because holding onto that pain will only keep us from moving forward.

Letting go doesn't mean pretending it never happened. It means choosing not to let it control us anymore.

Why Holding On to Bitterness Hurts Us More

It can be all too easy to believe that our anger has a purpose. And in some ways, it does. Pain from abandonment makes sense. Resentment towards an absent father is completely understandable. Bitterness will not make the offender suffer, instead, it makes us suffer more.

Keeping resentment is equal to drinking poison while expecting another to feel the effects of the consequences. This will never bring alterations to the past. Instead, one way to heal yourself is to change the narrative by forgiving and letting go.

With anger comes power, and how we as an individual decide to face it will define our existence. Tough situations have a unique way of revealing one's character. Ephesians 4:32 indicates one such character trait that focuses on kindness, compassion, and forgiving others. Yelling, cursing, or holding on to grudges is not the answer to anger, and while forgiveness doesn't equate to ignoring wrongs done to you, addressing wrongs done towards you has its benefits too.

The Importance of Forgiveness in the Healing Process

Considered to be a sensitive topic, forgiveness is often misunderstood. Undoubtedly, it goes hand in hand with healing, but many view healing as shouting "all is well" once the pain fades. But true healing isn't about ignoring the hurt, it's about understanding its source. Whether we choose to forgive or not, recognizing where our pain comes from can bring us peace.

Forgiveness is removing the burden of anger towards someone, but for that, one must be willing to relent and stand down to God.

At the end of the day, surrendering to God is the one superpower of self. Wrath in itself is built over the years, and anger simply fills the glass, meaning letting go won't happen overnight. Whether it feels like a distant memory or as fresh as yesterday, pondering sessions are allowed. Take all the time you want, but come to terms with the fact that healing is a journey.

Many choose God, and that's the right approach. First, choosing yourself and trusting God will bring solace, a point of surrender towards God which, while it may seem like a task, allows relenting to feel light.

Overcoming self-perception and insecurities

For many who grew up without a father, anger is just one part of the struggle. The deeper issue is often insecurity.

A father's presence is meant to provide affirmation, identity, and security. When that is missing, it's easy to wonder if we are enough. If we are lovable. If we are worthy.

Many spend years searching for that validation—through relationships, through achievements, through trying to be perfect. But no amount of success or approval from others can fill the void left by an absent father.

The only thing that can heal that wound is knowing who we are in God.

God calls us His children. He does not see us as abandoned, forgotten, or unworthy. He sees us as chosen, loved, and valuable.

In Isaiah 43:1, God says, *"I have called you by name; you are mine."*

Your worth has never been tied to a person's presence or absence. It has always been tied to God. And He has never once left you.

Breaking Free from the Past

Healing from anger, resentment, and insecurity is not about pretending the pain never happened. It's about choosing not to let it define you.

It's about deciding that your identity is not found in what you lack, but in who God says you are. It's about stepping into freedom, even when it feels unfamiliar.

Some days will be harder than others. Some days, old wounds might try to reopen. But every day, you have a choice:

- A choice to hold onto the past or a choice to move forward in God's love.
- A choice to let bitterness take root or a choice to release it into God's hands.
- A choice to believe that you are not enough or a choice to trust that God has already called you enough.

The journey of healing is not always easy, but with God, it is always possible.

Steps to Forgive and Move Forward in Faith

Forgiveness is one of the hardest things to do, especially when the wounds run deep. When someone has hurt us—especially a father who was supposed to be there—it feels unfair to let go of the pain. It can feel like forgiveness is saying, *"What you did doesn't matter."*

But that's not what forgiveness is.

Forgiveness isn't about excusing someone's actions. It's about freeing yourself from the weight of holding onto the pain. It's about refusing to let what happened to you control your future.

When we hold onto bitterness, we carry the burden of someone else's actions. The anger, the resentment, and the hurt don't just affect them—they affect us. They shape how we see ourselves, how we trust others, and how we relate to God.

But God offers another way. He calls us to forgive, not because it's easy, but because it leads to healing.

Ephesians 4:31-32 says, *"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

God knows that holding onto pain only keeps us trapped. That's why He invites us to let go, to trust Him with our wounds, and to step into the freedom that only forgiveness can bring.

But how do we actually do that? How do we forgive when the pain is real and the past feels too heavy to release?

Step 1: Be Honest About the Pain

Forgiveness starts with acknowledging the hurt. Pretending it doesn't exist won't make it go away. Suppressing it only makes it fester.

Maybe you've been carrying wounds for years, afraid to admit how much they've affected you. Maybe you've told yourself that you don't care, that you're fine without your father, that his absence didn't shape you.

But deep down, the pain is still there.

Before you can forgive, you have to face the truth of how you feel. Bring your emotions to God. Tell Him about the anger, the sadness, the confusion. He can handle it. He already knows.

Psalm 34:18 reminds us, *"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."*

Your pain matters to God. And He wants to heal it.

Step 2: Choose to Forgive, Even When It Feels Impossible

Forgiveness is not a feeling—it's a choice. If we wait until we *feel* ready to forgive, we may never get there.

Sometimes, we convince ourselves that forgiveness has to come with closure, with an apology, with the other person making things right. But the truth is, we can forgive even if they never say they're sorry.

Jesus showed us this on the cross. As He was being crucified, He said, *"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Luke 23:34)

The people who hurt Him never apologized. But He forgave anyway.

Forgiveness is a decision. It's saying, *"I release this person to God. I refuse to let bitterness control my heart."*

It's not a one-time event. Some days, the anger may creep back in. Some days, the pain may feel fresh again. But each day, we can choose forgiveness all over again.

Step 3: Trust God to Bring Justice

One of the hardest parts of forgiveness is feeling like someone is getting away with what they did. The thought of forgiving can feel like saying, *"It doesn't matter."*

But forgiveness doesn't mean justice won't be served. It just means that we trust God to handle it instead of carrying it ourselves.

Romans 12:19 says, *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord."*

God is just. He sees everything. And He will deal with every hurt in His perfect way.

When we forgive, we are not saying that what happened was okay. We are saying that we trust God more than we trust our own desire for revenge.

Step 4: Surrender the Pain to God

Letting go of pain is not easy. Some wounds feel too deep, too raw, too overwhelming.

But God doesn't ask us to do it alone.

Matthew 11:28 says, *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."*

God invites us to bring our pain to Him. To lay it down. To stop carrying it by ourselves.

What does that look like?

- It means praying and surrendering it to Him—every time the pain resurfaces.
- It means asking Him for the strength to forgive—even when it feels impossible.
- It means trusting that He will heal what is broken—even if it takes time.
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God never asks us to let go of something without giving us something greater in return. When we surrender our hurt, He replaces it with His peace.

Step 5: Walk in Freedom

Forgiveness is not just about the past—it's about the future.

When we forgive, we break free from the chains that have held us back. We stop defining ourselves by our wounds. We stop letting someone else's actions dictate our peace.

- Instead of walking in anger, we walk in joy.
- Instead of being weighed down by resentment, we are lifted by grace.
- Instead of searching for closure in the past, we find healing in God's love.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

You are not bound by your past. You are not defined by what happened to you.

When you choose to forgive, you choose a new beginning.

Discussion: How Can You Surrender Pain to God?

1. What emotions have you struggled with when it comes to forgiveness?
2. How has holding onto pain affected your heart, your mind, and your relationships?
3. What is one step you can take today to release bitterness and walk in freedom?
4. How does trusting God's justice help you let go of resentment?

Forgiveness is not about pretending the past didn't happen. It's not about ignoring the pain. It's about choosing freedom over bitterness, healing over resentment, and peace over anger.

It doesn't happen overnight. Some days, the wounds will still feel fresh. Some days, you may have to forgive all over again.

But every time you choose to forgive, you loosen the grip of the past.

God never intended for you to live burdened by pain. He never meant for you to carry anger and resentment for the rest of your life. He has something better for you—peace, joy, and the freedom that comes from letting go.

So today, take a step. Pray. Surrender. And trust that God is big enough to heal every wound.

Building a Strong Future with God

Key Scripture: Jeremiah 29:11

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Breaking Free from the Past

The past has a way of trying to define us. If you grew up without a father or experienced pain in your childhood, it's easy to feel like you're stuck in a cycle you didn't choose. Maybe you've heard people say, "You'll end up just like him" or "You can't change where you come from."

But that is not the truth.

God makes it clear in Jeremiah 29:11 that He has a plan for your life—a plan filled with hope and purpose. Your past may have shaped you, but it does not have to define your future. With God, you can break free from the patterns of hurt, insecurity, and brokenness and step into a new life that is full of meaning, direction, and peace.

Maybe your father's absence left a void. Maybe it created fear, resentment, or doubts about your worth. Maybe it made you believe that you have to figure life out on your own. But God is offering you something different—a future that is not built on the pain of yesterday but on the foundation of His love and guidance.

The first step to building a strong future with God is choosing to let go of what was and embracing what can be.

Breaking Negative Cycles

It's often said that history repeats itself. Many people who grow up in broken homes fear that they will continue the same patterns in their own lives. The enemy wants you to believe that because your father wasn't there, you will fail in your own relationships, your own family, and your own walk with God.

But God is in the business of breaking chains.

Maybe your father wasn't present. That doesn't mean you have to carry that absence into your own family.

Maybe you grew up in dysfunction. That doesn't mean you can't build a home centered on faith and love. Maybe you were never taught how to trust. That doesn't mean you can't learn to trust in God.

2 Corinthians 5:17 reminds us, *"If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"*

You are not bound by the mistakes of the past. You don't have to follow the same path that led to pain. Through Christ, you can begin again.

Surrendering Your Future to God

Trying to control your own future without God leads to stress, fear, and disappointment. But when you place your future in God's hands, He leads you with wisdom, protection, and grace.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."*

Trusting God means believing that He knows what is best, even when you don't have all the answers. It means surrendering your plans, your fears, and your dreams to Him and allowing Him to guide you.

Surrender is not a sign of weakness—it's a sign of faith. It means you no longer have to figure everything out on your own because your Father in Heaven is leading you.

Creating a Christ-Centered Life

Building a future with God means making Him the foundation of everything you do. When Christ is at the center of your life, your decisions, relationships, and purpose all align with His will.

So, how do you create a Christ-centered life?

First, prioritize your relationship with God. Spend time in His Word, talk to Him in prayer, and invite Him into every part of your life.

Second, surround yourself with godly influences. The people you allow into your life will shape your future. Be intentional about surrounding yourself with people who encourage you in faith, who challenge you to grow, and who remind you of God's truth when life gets hard.

Third, make decisions that reflect your faith. When you're faced with choices about your career, relationships, and daily life, ask yourself: *Does this bring me closer to God? Does this honor Him?*

A strong future isn't built on wishful thinking—it's built on daily choices that align with God's purpose for your life.

Healing from Doubt and Fear

The unknown can be scary. Maybe you're afraid of failing. Maybe you doubt that you have what it takes to build a better future. Maybe you wonder if God really has a good plan for you after everything you've been through.

But God does not give us a spirit of fear.

2 Timothy 1:7 says, *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline.”*

Fear is a tool of the enemy to keep you stuck. He wants you to believe that you’re not capable, that you’ll never change, that you’ll never be enough. But God’s Word speaks a different truth over you.

- You are strong through Him.
- You are capable through Him.
- You are already loved, chosen, and worthy.

Your future is not dependent on your past. It is dependent on God’s faithfulness.

Trusting God’s Timing

Sometimes, we want things to change instantly. We want to heal overnight, to break free from struggles immediately, to see results right away. But God’s plan unfolds in His perfect timing.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 reminds us, *“He has made everything beautiful in its time.”*

Trust that God is working, even when you don’t see it yet. Trust that He is shaping your future in ways beyond what you can imagine. His timing is not delayed—it is perfect.

Moving Forward with Confidence

Building a strong future with God isn’t just about leaving the past behind—it’s about moving forward with confidence in who He has called you to be.

You are not alone in this journey. God is with you, guiding you, strengthening you, and equipping you for what’s ahead.

Jeremiah 29:11 is a promise—not just for some people but for you.

So take a step forward. Release the weight of the past. Trust that what God has for you is greater than anything you’ve left behind.

Seeking Healthy Mentors and Relationships

Relationships shape us. The people we surround ourselves with influence the way we think, the decisions we make, and even the way we see ourselves. If you grew up without a father or with one who was absent or hurtful, you may have struggled with knowing who to trust, who to learn from, or who to turn to for guidance.

But here's the good news: You don't have to figure everything out alone.

God didn't create us to walk through life by ourselves. He places people in our lives to encourage us, to teach us, and to help us grow. Seeking healthy mentors and relationships is not just a good idea—it's part of God's plan for our healing and future.

Proverbs 27:17 says, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* This means the right relationships can refine you, strengthen you, and help you become the person God created you to be.

But how do you find these relationships? How do you know who to trust? How do you open yourself up to guidance when trust has been broken before?

Why Healthy Relationships Matter

If you've spent most of your life feeling like you had to depend only on yourself, it might feel uncomfortable to seek help from others. Maybe you've been let down in the past. Maybe you've been taught that vulnerability is weakness. Maybe trusting people has led to disappointment before, so you've convinced yourself that it's safer to rely only on yourself.

But isolation isn't the answer. God created us for connection.

Healthy relationships provide:

- **Wisdom** – No one knows everything. A strong mentor can offer guidance, helping you navigate challenges with faith and wisdom.
- **Encouragement** – Life is hard. Having people in your corner reminds you that you're not alone.
- **Accountability** – We all need people who will challenge us to make the right choices, even when it's difficult.
- **Healing** – God often works through relationships to bring healing to wounds we can't fix on our own.

Finding the Right Mentors

A mentor is someone who has walked the road ahead of you—someone with wisdom, experience, and a strong foundation in faith. The right mentor will point you toward God, not just give you advice based on personal opinions.

So how do you find a good mentor?

First, pray about it. Ask God to bring the right people into your life. He knows exactly who you need and when you need them.

Second, look for someone whose life reflects Christ. A mentor doesn't have to be perfect, but they should be someone who is actively seeking God and living out their faith.

Third, be willing to learn. A mentor can only help if you're open to guidance. Humility is key—sometimes their advice may challenge you, but growth requires being teachable.

If you're not sure where to find a mentor, consider looking in your church, small group, or community. God often places the right people in our lives—we just need to be willing to recognize them.

Building Healthy Friendships

Beyond mentors, having godly friendships is just as important. The people you spend the most time with will shape your mindset, habits, and spiritual growth.

1 Corinthians 15:33 warns, *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”*

The wrong relationships can pull you away from God. They can encourage bad habits, feed negativity, and leave you feeling drained. But the right friendships will lift you up, remind you of God's truth, and challenge you to grow.

If you've struggled with trusting people, building friendships might feel difficult. But God doesn't want you to do life alone. He wants you to have a community—a group of people who will stand with you, pray for you, and walk through life with you.

So how do you build healthy friendships?

Start by being the kind of friend you want to have. If you want friends who are kind, loyal, and godly, be that kind of friend to others.

Be intentional about spending time with people who encourage your faith. Get involved in a Bible study, a small group, or a ministry where you can meet others who share your values.

Friendships take time, but God will bring the right people into your life when you seek relationships that honor Him.

Avoiding Toxic Relationships

Not every relationship is good for you. Some people drain your energy, feed your insecurities, or pull you away from God. If you've struggled with abandonment or rejection in the past, you may find yourself drawn to unhealthy relationships—ones that repeat the same cycles of hurt.

But God wants better for you.

A healthy relationship:

- Builds you up, rather than tearing you down.
- Brings you closer to God, rather than leading you away.
- Encourages growth rather than feeding bad habits.

If a relationship is toxic—whether it’s a friendship, a romantic relationship, or even a family connection—ask God for the strength to step away.

God created you for relationships that reflect His love. Don’t settle for anything less.

Trusting God’s Plan for Relationships

If you’ve been hurt in the past, trusting again can feel risky. Maybe you’ve experienced broken relationships before, and you’re afraid of opening yourself up again. Maybe you’re wondering if you’ll ever find the right people who truly care.

But God is a God of restoration.

He knows your heart. He sees your struggles. And He is more than capable of bringing the right people into your life.

Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us that God’s plans for us are good. That includes the people He places in our lives. He is not going to leave you isolated, directionless, or without support. He is working behind the scenes, preparing relationships that will strengthen your faith and your future.

But you have to take the first step.

Be open to the community. Be willing to trust again. Be patient with the process. God is faithful, and He will bring the right people at the right time.

Discussion: What Steps Can You Take to Trust God’s Plan?

1. Have you struggled with trusting people because of past hurts? How has that affected your relationships?
2. What qualities should you look for in a mentor or godly friend?
3. How can surrounding yourself with godly people help you grow in your faith?
4. What steps can you take today to seek out healthy relationships and trust God’s plan for your future?

Final Thoughts

Seeking healthy mentors and relationships isn't just about having people around—it's about building a support system that aligns with God's plan for your life.

You don't have to do life alone. God has people ready to walk alongside you, encourage you, and help you grow.

So take a step. Open your heart to the right relationships. Let go of fear and trust that God is bringing the right people at the right time.

Your future is not meant to be lived in isolation. God designed you for the community. And He will provide exactly what you need.