The Role of the Father

Hebrews 12:5-11
Pastor Bryan Clark

I think it's obvious that all of us have different stories. We come from different backgrounds, different experiences. Well, one of the things that we all share in common is every single one of us was parented in some way. Now when I use that term, I'm using it pretty broadly, but somehow, someway, you got to where you are today—you didn't raise yourself. So it may have been your birth parents; it may have been your adoptive parents; it may have been foster homes; it may have been an orphanage; it may have been a single-parent. Somehow, someway, you were parented, and whether you fully understand this or not, how you were parented dramatically affects your view of God. As a matter of fact, I would suggest that probably the majority of people in this room have formulated a view of God that is based more on your experiences—how you were parented—than it does on what God says about Himself in the Bible.

Now this is a bit of a sobering reality when you understand that the single most significant factor in determining your experience as a Christian is your view of God. Some of you, with all sincerity, have been seeking hard after God. You want to experience intimacy with God; you want to experience God as a place of safety and refuge; you want to experience His joy and this peace in your relationship with God, but if you were to be honest this morning, you would say, "I sincerely have tried, but I just can't get there." It is very likely that the problem you have is that you have a faulty view of God. There is simply nothing that can compensate for a wrong view of God. There's no book you can read—there's no formula until that view is corrected. God has intended that the home be a place where God is both experienced and learned about. If it's done correctly, it's very powerful in formulating a right view of God and really sending those children on a trajectory that will define their lives. But if it's done poorly, it is powerful for destruction. Well, that's what we want to talk about. Next week, in honor of Mother's Day, we're going to talk about the role of the mother, so this week we're going to talk about the role of the father.

Just a couple of quick things as we start: it's good to remind ourselves that there are no guarantees in parenting. This isn't like a magic formula. There's no *1-2-3—and it's all going to work out*. You can be the world's best parents and have a child that rebels; you can be the worst parents and have children that turn out. But certainly doing it God's way puts the odds in your favor of experiencing the outcome that both you and God want for your children. Second of all, it's important to remind ourselves that this is a very complicated culture. I'm fifty-four years old. I grew up in the '60s and the '70s and I would suggest to you this world is far more complicated than it was when we were growing up. Parents need to understand that this is going to take a lot of thought, a lot of strategy to parent well in such a complicated culture. The other part of that is: one of the things that defines our culture and our lives is we are so busy—I would say way too busy! Now here's the problem. You have a culture that's going to take way more thought, way more strategy, way more relationship to help children navigate through this culture, in a culture where we're way too busy to do that. You put those two things together and we have a recipe for a perfect storm, a disastrous storm.
You add one more piece to that. There was a day—in the words of Hillary Clinton, "It takes a village," —there was a day when the village was pretty much all on-board, embracing the parents' value system. We don't live in a culture like that any more. I would suggest to you, in most places, the culture—the village—is at war with the values that matter to you as a Christian parent. You put all that together and this is a very complicated journey. Those of us who have raised children need

to be diligent to pray for these young parents and to involve ourselves and help any way we can, because it's going to be very difficult to raise children in a very complicated culture.

Now, as we walk our way through this, there are two audiences to this message. One is those of us that are dads, especially those of you that are dads with children that are still home—that's rather obvious. But the other audience would be all of us, in the fact that we were all parented—we all had dads. Even whether you knew your dad or not, you still have a dad and what flowed out of that has dramatically affected your view of God. So, part of the challenge is to think back: *What was my experience?* We're going to try to present: *This is what it should be.* So what did I experience and how has that affected my view of God, and is it possible I need to make some corrections in order to have a more accurate view of God?

When our firstborn—when Ashley was born, one of the questions I was wrestling with as a dad was: *What specifically is my role?* I had grown up hearing that there is a biblical role for a husband and a biblical role for a wife, so I was aware of that. I would say what I understood about that was incorrect, and I've had to adjust it and correct it over the years, but I still was aware there were such roles. But I found myself thinking, "*I've never really heard a biblical description of the role of the father and the mother.*" So I began to do some research, read some books, and what I found is nobody really talked about it. So, when all else fails, you go back to *The Book* and I thought, I wonder what I can learn. So I began to search the Scriptures, just for my own parenting, and what I ended up finding was a very consistent pattern. Whenever God wanted to reveal that part of His character that's very loving or very nurturing, He consistently used the imagery of a mother. Whenever God wanted to reveal that part of His character that is the disciplinarian—by disciplinarian I include in that coaching, instructing, and correcting—I found God consistently used the imagery of a father. So I would suggest to you there is such a thing as a biblical role of the father and a biblical role of the mother. Next week we'll deal with the mother. This week we're going to talk to the fathers. So, with that in mind, if you have a Bible, turn with us to Hebrews, Chapter 12.

Probably the most efficient use of our time is not running all over the Bible, trying to make my case for this, so much as just taking you to one text that clearly communicates that and then trying to unpack some of the information in the text. We pick it up part of the way through verse 5:

> **"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD,**
> **NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM;**
> **FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,**
> **AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."**

It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. (*NASB, Hebrews 12: 5b-11)

Now there are a number of things out of the text we could talk about, but I want to start by talking about kind of the big picture in all of this. There's no question, when I read that text, that God is saying that the earthly father is meant to represent the heavenly Father in his discipline—that this is the imagery; this is the picture which, for those of us who are dads, is a very sobering thing. This is a very high and holy calling. I am actually called to represent God to my children, and specifically in the area of discipline, coaching, and instructing. What if every time we, as fathers, before we administered discipline to our children, stopped and thought: *I am about to teach my child, "This is how God treats you," and had that clearly in my mind before I carry out my discipline. How would it change how I discipline?*

Let me ask you a couple questions: When was the last time God grabbed you by the arm and slammed you down in a chair? When was the last time God yelled at you? When was the last time God just went off? When was the last time God disengaged or disconnected? When was the last time God wouldn't listen to you? When was the last time God wasn't there for you? If that's not how God parents us, why would we parent our children that way? Why would we misrepresent God to them?

As I mentioned before, some of you here this morning—I believe you're completely sincere in your desire to walk in obedience to God, to experience God with intimacy, to experience God as a place of refuge and a place of safety, the place you go when life's falling apart, but if you were to be honest, you'd say, *"It just doesn't work; I can't get there*." Stop and think about it. Was your dad, for you, a place of refuge? Was he a place of unconditional love? Was he a place of safety? Was he the place that you would go when life was falling apart? Or was your dad angry? Was your dad never satisfied? Did your dad look at you with those eyes that say, *"You'll never measure up; I'm so disappointed in you"*? Was your dad one of those dads where you never knew on any given day if he's going to go off or not? You would never describe your dad as being safe. He was unpredictable. If that's your experience, there's a pretty good chance you've projected that onto God. You simply cannot be intimate with someone you don't trust. You cannot be intimate with someone who's not safe. You just can't; that's the very definition of intimacy. How different is it if your experience has been a dad who is loving, who is compassionate, who is kind, who is predictable, who is safe, and when your world is falling apart, you knew that no matter what happened in your world, there was a place you could go and it was always going to be safe and there was this feeling, "It's going to be okay"? Because that, too, gets projected onto God and God then becomes for you a place of intimacy, a place of safety, a place of refuge.

When we talk about rightly representing God, a lot of it comes back to this discussion about grace. We often refer *to grace-based parenting*. Now we offer a number of classes that help people sort out the details of this, but let me give you some big-picture thoughts. First of all, on almost every occasion, when we talk about grace-based parenting, somebody asks the question, "I don't know; what does that mean?" That's probably the most-asked question I hear in that context. Now, what is that person saying? It could be, "*I just need some clarification*." But I would suggest, in a majority of the cases, what's actually being asked is, "*I don't really understand what that means in my relationship with God, so I don't understand what it means to parent that way*. If you don't ultimately relate to God that way, there's no way you can parent that way.

This isn't a formula. It's not 1-2-3—just-turn-it-on. So it starts with understanding your own relationship with God. Now the timing of this is good because we're just coming off our study of the book of Romans, so in your mind, go back through Romans. What does that mean? How does God view us through the lens of His grace? How does God treat us? What did God do for us?

What does that mean? —and to experience that relationship in your relationship with God? If you don't *get it* with God, you're never going to parent that way. I would suggest to you: your parenting style reveals your true theology. In other words, what's coming out is what you really believe about your relationship with God.

So what do we mean when we talk about *grace-based parenting*? Well, let's start with the contrast, which is what I think is most commonly embraced. So, let's just use Roman's language and call it *law-based parenting*—and take the concepts right out of the book of Romans. Law-based parenting is about conformity. It's about: one way or another I'm going to get this child to conform to the law. I'm going to get this child to comply to the standards. So it's about whatever I need to do to make that happen. It may be about anger; it may be about intimidation; it may be about manipulation; it may be a punishment and reward system—even to the degree I have to make the punishment more painful than the pleasure of the rebellion. But one way or another, I'm going to get this kid into compliance and, as a dad, we ratchet it up and say, *"One way or another, I'm going to win—whatever it takes*." It's an external, outside-in approach. Now there's a lot of risk to this approach. One of the great risks is some children just simply are very compliant. So they follow the rules and you have misunderstood that to believe everything's okay on the inside—when everything's *not* okay on the inside. Things might be a real mess on the inside; it's just that they're compliant.

The other risk is the other end of it. You have a child that just can't take that and rebels against it, and the more you lay down the rules and your methods, the more it's going to drive that child deeper into that rebellion. Sometimes I think parents think, this grace thing—it's all kind of soft and fluffy—and that word's fine if you have really nice compliant children. But when that child starts to rebel, I have to lay down *the law*. You hear what I just said? I just exposed my true theology—that when the going gets tough, what will change that rebellious child's heart and bring him or her home is the law, even though everything we learned in the book of Romans says otherwise. The Bible couldn't be clearer—that the law has no capacity to change the human heart. What we've revealed in that moment is our own core theology, and frankly, it just doesn't work. One of my favorite stories is Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, and what I love about this story is the tension between law and grace. That's the storyline all the way through. Which has more power to change a human heart, law or grace? We know, at the end of day, it's only grace that truly changes a human heart.

Now I've done this enough times; I know what's going to happen. Some of you are going to go home—you won't say it to me, but you'll say it to somebody, who'll say it to somebody—and then it gets back to me, (laughter) and what you'll say is this. "He doesn't know, because he had three really good kids." I'll grant you that. I have three really good kids, and they're a gift from God. I'm not claiming to be super-parent. They're a gift from God and I'm thankful for that...but—you knew that was coming.

My job as a pastor—what I get paid to do—is to deal with God's disobedient, rebellious children on a weekly basis. All of us, as pastors, probably deal with more rebellious children of God on a weekly basis, than most parents do in a year. And I will tell you: most of the time what's happening is these people are rebelling against an unfortunate, highly legalistic religious view of God and they just couldn't take it, so they run. What brings healing and change to their wounded heart is not more of the same. It is an understanding and an experience of the life-changing grace of God. I will tell you, and so will all our pastors, that what changes a rebellious heart over and over and over again, is the grace of God.

So what does that look like at home? The difference between law-based parenting—which is external, which is conformity, which is, "If you're going to live under my roof..." kind of an attitude—to understanding that there's something supernatural that has to happen in the life of my children. There needs to be a moment when they go from being *in Adam* to being *in Christ*, when they go from being enslaved to sin to being set free from sin, where they have the power of the Spirit of God to live righteously in a very contaminated world. It's an inside-out, intrinsic motivation and passion for righteousness. That's what has to happen and it happens on the basis of God's grace.

So what is my role as the parent? Obviously, I can't do that. I'm not supernatural; I'm not God. What I can do is create an environment where that is most likely to happen. I can prepare the soil for God to plant the seeds. I do that two ways. One way is by modeling my own grace-based relationship with God. I want my children to see I love God; I'm excited about God; I find my joy in God; I find my significance in God; I find my purpose in God. He, for me, is my place of refuge. He's my love relationship. I want them to see that when we experience the most difficult moments of a family, God is where I run to; God is where I find my refuge; God is where I find my safety. In our worst moments as a family, I believe God will take care of us because that's who He is. If you go a different direction in the most difficult moments of your family, you're teaching your children something unfortunate about God. When people deeply wound me, what my kids need to see is me respond in grace, in forgiveness, in love, in kindness. I want them to see that in me so they have some understanding of what grace looks like.

So, first of all, I have to model my own relationship with God on the basis of grace. But second, I have to be very thoughtful about how I'm representing God to my children. What do I want my children to believe about God? —and treat them that way. I want them to know that God is compassionate, that God is kind, that God is loving, that God is patient, that God is forgiving, that God celebrates them. Does God spend all day, as your Heavenly Daddy, nitpicking you, reminding you everyday, everything you're doing wrong, or does He celebrate you in His grace? An environment based on law is a negative environment that's primarily about correcting. An environment based on grace is a positive environment mostly about celebrating, with occasional correcting. If I believe my child has had a meaningful experience with the God of the universe, and has experienced true conversion, then deep within them is a flicker, a flicker of a flame that will define their lives and, it's part of my job to fan that flicker into a flame and help them to realize this is where life is found; this is where it's at—that you, from the deepest part of your being, would have a passion for righteousness from the inside out. It's part of my job to create an environment where that is most likely to happen.

I tend to be a goal-oriented guy. That just makes sense to me, so when I'm thinking about something, I'm trying to think, *"Well, where are we going; where are we trying to get?"* It's interesting to me how many men—fathers—are totally goal-driven in the marketplace and don't have the slightest clue of what we're aiming at, at home. You know you could not run a business that way. You know you couldn't be successful in the marketplace that way, but at home it's like, "Eh, whatever." What is the goal? One real, practical goal that Patti and I set, that we found helpful, is by the beginning of our daughter's senior years in high school, we would be able to completely take hands off—no rules, no curfews, nothing, because we wanted to see how they would manage that. I want one year of that, under my roof, because I want to see what decisions they make. I want to be there if they have some questions. I want to be there if they need a little correcting or nudging. I want to be part of that. I don't want that to happen five hundred miles away at college somewhere. So it's a worthy goal. This is what we're striving for; this is what

we're working toward; this has to be so internal; it has to be so intrinsic that they themselves will navigate their way through a very complicated culture.

Just a couple of other observations, then, from the Hebrews 12 text: that's kind of the big picture. Verse 6 reminds us that *God disciplines us because He loves us*. It's just a good reminder that discipline flows out of love. I know that seems rather obvious, but stop and think about it. It should not flow out of anger. It should not flow out of frustration. It should not flow out of embarrassment. It flows out of love. Sometimes, as parents, we need to take a deep breath, back off for a minute and regain our composure before we misrepresent God to our children. It should flow out of our love. The text says God *disciplines us because He loves us*. It means we're legitimate children. I don't go around disciplining other people's children but I do discipline my own children because they're my children and I love them and I have that commitment to them.

Second of all, in verse 9, he says it flows out of a relationship of respect—that our children respect us because we discipline them. Now, here's what it *doesn't* mean. It doesn't mean, if your children disrespect you before you discipline them, that after you discipline them, they will respect you. What it does mean is that discipline flows out of a relationship of respect, that I work hard to build a respectful relationship with my children, so when it's time to discipline them, it flows out of that relationship and they respect me for it.

Children should not be given total freedom. That just creates immense insecurities and fears, because they're just not wired up to have that much responsibility. There's great safety in knowing there's boundaries—that if I start to get out-of-bounds, somebody loves me enough to correct me. And so my children will respect me for that. It actually breeds within them a level of security. But I have to work hard at building a relationship of respect with them. One of the reasons why parents like a law-based system is because it's black and white. Here's the rules: comply or else. There's something very appealing about that. We, as dads, like it because it's very efficient. I can walk into a room; I can recite the rules; I can lay down the punishment. "That's the way it is if you're going to live under my roof," and I can walk out of the room—five minutes and I'm on with what *I* want to do, and frankly, that's how a lot of dads discipline their children. In order to have respect, it takes time. Grace-based parenting takes time. It takes investment; it takes a lot of listening; it takes a lot of questions. It takes a lot of caring; it takes a lot of being there, in order to create an environment where we respect one another, in order for this to work.

One of the challenges for leaders in the marketplace, one of the challenges for dads at home, is: bad methods work! I can use fear; I can use intimidation; I can use manipulation; I can use punishment; I can make this thing work. I have no doubt that, as a dad, I can force my girls into compliance—for a while. I guarantee you, whether we're talking about leaders in the marketplace, whether we're talking about dads, there's a price tag for that and the price tag tends to be very expensive. There's a huge difference between a dad who involves himself, a dad who listens, a dad who is there, a dad who is trying to understand, a dad who's building a relationship, and out of that we do our discipline. I would suggest to you: to be an effective, grace-based father, you must choose to put much of your life on hold for a season. It takes a tremendous amount of self-sacrifice.

Let me give you just a couple of quick things to think about in this respect category. One is: do away with ultimatums. Ultimatums always flow out of a position of weakness. They're never effective in the marketplace; they aren't effective at home. If you're saying to somebody in the marketplace, "Do this or else," you are in a position of weakness. Things are breaking down; you're in trouble. That's exactly the same thing at home. If you have to threaten your child in order

to get compliance from your child, you're on thin ice; something's breaking down. If you cultivate a relationship of respect, you should be able to say, "I'm just asking you to do this, and because we mutually love and respect each other, I'm expecting you to do it." There's no threat with that. So this is one that I would think about: Lose the ultimatums.

Second of all, we, as parents, need to do way more listening. So here's my formula. Ask lots of questions and reduce dramatically the number of lectures—especially if you have adolescents. The weapon that parents use the most—I guarantee you—is your least effective weapon. Lose the lectures; increase the questions and, by questions I don't mean interrogation. I mean, "How are you doing?" I mean, "What are your hopes and dreams?" "What are you feeling?" "How is it going?" "How can I help you?" "Why did you do that?" "How could I have been there for you better?" "How can we do this differently in the future?" Enter into a respectful relationship.

And that's my third thing: If you want respect back from your children, give them respect. Have you ever thought about the possibility that the behaviors in your children that irritate you, that you don't like, are actually a mirror back as to how you're treating them? If you don't want your children to disrespect you, don't disrespect them. If you don't want your children to yell at you, don't yell at them—he says as he yells at you. (laughter) Now parents just dismiss this as foolishness. I would challenge you, I think it's true. Oftentimes, the behaviors that you don't like in your children are simply a reflection of how you are treating them. If you want to clean it up, clean up your own act, and you might be surprised how that changes them.

In verse 10 he says this is *for a short time*. It's sobering, as parents, to realize this is a really short season. You wake up one morning and it's over. You can't afford to waste a single day. It's helpful to remind ourselves that the great parenting moments are not trips to Disney World. They are the everyday moments in the trenches of life. That's where real parenting happens, and it's a very short season. It's often not until things are a mess that you realize, "Maybe I should have spent a little bit more time at home."

Now for us, as men, here's the deal—kind of man to man. We, as men, are competitive; that's part of how most of us are wired up. We also have a level of insecurity. We all do, and it usually is because we're competitive. And so there's this need to succeed, this need to drive, this need to fulfill something, to build something, to accomplish something, to be something—and that drives us to be successful in the marketplace. But here's the challenge. At the time in life when our children need us the most is probably in the time of life when the demands of the marketplace are crying the most. That's part of the challenge of our culture—we're trying to establish ourselves; we're trying to get a career going or a business going, and so the time that takes so much demand from us, is, at the same time, that time we need to be at home and be fathers. So you feel this tension. That's a legitimate tension; it's a real tension—but here's something to think about.

Our tendency, as men, is to go where we get the most applause. We go where people are applauding; people are promoting; people are reviewing; people are paying, and so we find that need to have that insecurity met in the marketplace. Hey, guess what, nobody's applauding at home; nobody's paying at home; nobody's doing a quarterly review; nobody's promoting at home. So, as men, we find ourselves drifting more and more into that which strokes our ego and less and less to that which doesn't applaud. This is the value system of the culture in which we live. If you don't think this is true, go back to a class reunion. When was the last time somebody said, "Oh by the way, are you a good husband?" "Are you a good father?" "That's really what matters to me." There will be none of that. "What do you do for a living?" "How much money do you make?" I

wonder what kind of car he drove; I wonder what his house looks like. That's the value system that reinforces this idea that: *that's where it's at*, and men tend to drift that way—and that's a problem!

Men have to be men and have the courage to set priorities. Your boss isn't going to answer for your children; you will! And sometimes you have to have the courage and the backbone to say, "No," and, "I'm going to do what I have to do to raise these children." The fact of the matter is: it's far easier to be wildly successful in the marketplace than it is to be successful at home. I think all of us understand: people in the marketplace fake it everyday. You can fake it your entire life in the marketplace. Good for you! But you can't fake it at home. At home, you're busted. Who you are at home is who you are, and you may be wildly successful in the marketplace but if you're failing at home, you're failing in your calling before God—and you better make some changes. Trust me, fifty years from now, nobody's going to care that you were wildly successful in the marketplace. Good for you; you made some money; you bought some stuff; the stuff's in the junkyard—nobody cares. But I guarantee you: there are some little people under your roof that—fifty years from now—will care a lot how you shaped their view of God. This is a very short season and you better do what you need to do to be the father God has called you to be at home.

At the end of the text and the end of verse 11, he reminds us that the product is the *fruit of righteousness*. At the end of the day, that's what we're striving for—that our children would have a right view of God, would have something supernatural taking place inside of them, and that they would be intrinsically motivated, in order to live righteously, to have a passion for righteousness as they live their way through their lives. So let me close with just a couple of comments to the two groups. For all of us, we need to back up and think about how was I parented and how might that have affected my view of God? As I said before, some of you long for intimacy with God; you long to know Him as a place of refuge, as a place of safety, and you're really trying hard; you just can't get there. Is it possible that your Heavenly Daddy looks a whole lot like your earthly daddy—and you have to begin the slow, difficult process of separating out earthly daddy and Heavenly Daddy?

Now a question people often ask is, "How do you do that?" It *is* difficult and it usually comes off in layers, but here's something you might find helpful. Anytime you're reading your Bible, you're listening to a sermon, you're in some sort of a Bible study—anytime you're somewhere where you're studying the truth of how God reveals Himself to you—so God says of Himself, "I'm good; I'm loving; I'm faithful; I'm compassionate; I'm kind." Anytime that God self-reveals Himself and you find yourself reacting to it a little bit, in other words, there's something inside of you that questions that: I'm not sure that's true; I'm not sure that's been my experience; I don't know that that's true. So, in other words, there's something inside of you that's saying, "I don't know that I buy that." Almost every time that's reflective of something wrong in your view of God—and that's when you just have to stop and back up. Why don't I believe that? Why am I struggling with that? Why does there seem to be a check in my spirit? Is it possible it's more related to something—an experience I've had, or possibly your experience with your earthly daddy? Some people have actually even created two columns, you know: *Heavenly Daddy*/*Earthly Daddy*, and, as you read through the Scriptures, you start to separate, "This is who God says He is," but, "This is my earthly daddy." I have to start to separate out which is which in order to cultivate a correct view of God.

For those of you that are dads—for those of us that are dads—it's important to remind ourselves: it's never too late to be a good dad. You can't go back and change the past. The past is past; there's no point putting a lot of energy into that. But it's never too late to be a good dad. Maybe you need to go back and make some apologies, and maybe you need to go back and set some things straight. But you can't change the past, so put your energy into what it would mean to be a good dad today.

What would it mean to be a good dad tomorrow and the next day? It's never too late to be a good dad, and for those of you that are dads that still have small children at home, I would plead with you that you would understand that you have a high and holy calling, perhaps the highest and holiest calling you will have in your lifetime—to rightly represent the God of the universe to those children. Please take that calling seriously before God because you will formulate, within your children, a view of God that will affect the trajectory of their lives for a lifetime!

Our Father, we're thankful that You love us. You're the perfect Heavenly Daddy. Lord, I pray that we would be very thoughtful about how You father us, especially we as dads, that we might rightly represent You to our children. Lord, I know there are people here this morning that just struggle with experiencing the intimacy and the love and the refuge that they want to find in You. Lord, I ask that You would give them supernatural ability, the ability of Your Spirit to be discerning, to separate out that which has given them a wrong view of You, that they might rightly view You, that they might experience what their souls long for. This we pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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