

Prayer stations

Kinnecting with God's heart for fathers, fathering and fatherhood

Use these kinaesthetic prayer stations to help people engage with prayer for fathers, fathering and fatherhood. Each one details what if any equipment you need to get together in advance, instructions for setting up, and the text for the instruction signs you will need to display – (simply copy and paste these into a word document, enlarging the font so that the instructions are clear enough to read).

Used together, the stations should take approximately 50-60 minutes to work round depending on how long people spend at each one, but if you have less time you can obviously leave out a couple. You can use them within an intercessions slot, have them set up as an installation for a special service or day of prayer (such as Father's day) and/or use them individually as prayer or intercession responses. If you are using them all together, they should be worked round in order.

You might also like to use mp3 worship tracks of songs whilst people work round the stations. Songs on the theme of God as father work particularly well.

1. The ultimate Father

Equipment needed: pens and paper, envelopes, print outs of *The Father's Love Letter* available at www.fathersloveletter.com/Media/ and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and find and print several copies of *The Father's Love Letter*.

On the day: Lay out the copies of the letter in separate envelopes and the pens and paper and display the sign you have made. (If you are using this resource at a small group session and/or you know who is coming, you might like to write their names on them.)

For display:

1. The Ultimate Father

- God did not happen upon the attribute of paternity accidentally! It is one of the names most often used to describe him in the Bible and is embodied in the trinity itself (even before people were created) because of the eternal relationship between Father God and Jesus. He can't help but be father! And he is the perfect one...
- In Zephaniah 3:17, God is described as delighting in his children and rejoicing over them with singing... A number of Christian writers and song-writers have been inspired by this verse and others to write about the Father's song... one of them, Barry Adams, compiled *The Father's Love Letter* from many different scriptures that help bring scripture to life.

- Take an envelope and write your name on it. Also take a piece of paper and a pen. Now find a quiet corner to read *The Father's Love Letter* to you and to then write a reply to God thanking him for the way he has fathered you.

2. Me and fathering

Equipment needed: something which can represent a tree (such as decorative branches in a vase), pre-made up people shapes (you can source these from Google images or use a gingerbread cutter to make a template), pens, whole punch, scissors, string and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section and get together the items you will need.

On the day: Lay out the items you have gathered and display the sign you have made.

For display:

2. Me and fathering

- Take a moment to think about your own family and experiences of fathering – good and difficult. Take person shape for each crucial father figure you have or had in your life – father, step-father, grandfather, mentor etc .
- Write each 'father's' name onto them and take one at a time. Offer your thoughts and emotions about each person and your relationship with them to God in turn, then hang them onto the family tree... thanking God that he is father to each of them as you do so.
- (If you are a father, take a final person outline and write your name on it. Offer your celebrations and struggles in this area to God and then add yourself to the family tree underneath your 'fathers'... thanking God that he is father to you as you do so.)
- Ask for God's help as you move on to the stations that are following now... that he will help you use your good and bad experiences to empathise and share his heart for all fathers and their children... and that he will bring healing, hope and vision to you even as you pray with him for others.

3. Building a vision for good fathering

Equipment needed: quite a number of Duplo bricks, address labels or stickers, pens and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Get together the items you need and enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Lay out the items you have brought and display the sign you have made.

For display:

3. Building a vision for good fathering

- Think about the characteristics and attributes that you think a good father exhibits. Write each one onto an address label and then stick it onto a separate building block. Use them to start to build!
- In Keith White's *The Growth of Love*, he sets out five elements of love that are needed for a child to give and receive love well: security, boundaries, significance, community and creativity. Reflect on how the characteristics you have been building with relate to these areas. Then write down any new characteristics that come to mind as a result of thinking about these.
- Look at the wall/building that is growing – and the vision for good fathering that is developing. Think about fathers you know personally as well as fathers generally and pray for them to share this vision and – with God's help – to grow in embodying it.

4. Fathers in crisis

Equipment needed: A3 or larger person outline ((you can source these from google images or use a gingerbread cutter to make a template)) which you have cut up into 10 pieces and labelled as follows:

- Financial worries or poverty
- Lack of good role models
- Legacy of bad fathering
- Personal struggles due to abuse or addiction
- Fear of being a bad father
- Being very young
- Workaholism or work pressure
- Illness or depression
- Brokenness in relationship with mother
- A desire for control or unresolved anger issues

and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Prepare your person outline as described above and enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Lay out the pieces of person and display the sign you have made.

For display:

4. Fathers in crisis

- Fathering has challenges even in 'normal' circumstances. But very few fathers have 'normal' circumstances all of the time...
- Look at the pieces of laid out at this station. They represent different situations or challenges facing fathers in crisis.
- Take one at a time and pray for those affected in this way.
- Then put it down, re-ordering the pieces as you work through them so that you rebuild a complete father.

- Thank God that he is able to come alongside fathers in crisis – healing their wounds and giving them strength, insight, guidance and power to father well. Pray that they would be open to his help, and to the help of other people and organisations that he might bring into their lives.

5. Lifting the fatherless

Equipment needed: A reasonably large free-standing cross, some fabric to form a sling or hammock that can be tied to both ends of the cross bar of the cross, pens, people outlines using the template provided at the end of this document not cut out but with space left around them (A5 is sufficient) and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Gather together the items you need and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Tie the fabric to the cross, lay out the people outlines, bibles and pens and display the sign you have made.

For display:

5. Lifting the fatherless

- Take a sheet of paper with a person outline on it and spend a few moments thinking about individuals and groups of people who experience feelings of fatherlessness. They might be orphaned, estranged or separated from their father, abandoned or neglected or have had such bad experiences that they feel like one or more of the above.
- Think back to station 3 when you helped build a vision for good fathering by thinking about the characteristics and attributes of godly fathers. Try and remember as many of these as you can and jot them down around the outside of the person representing the fatherless.
- Thank God that he is the perfect father and that he releases fathering to people through all sorts of other men (and women) that he brings into their lives. Pray that he would minister his love and healing to the fatherless, especially lifting any individuals you know personally to him, by bringing fathering figures into their lives.
- Thank God that he is also directly pursuing each person with his perfect fathering love. As a symbol of this – and trusting him with the fatherless – place your person into the hammock on the cross... remembering Jesus' outstretched arms on the cross for them, and the Father's arms and overshadowing wing hiding and protecting them.

6. Lifting a fatherless society

Equipment needed: print outs of a UK map on A4 paper (you can source basic outlines through google images), sheets of A4 tracing paper, different coloured pens and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Gather together the items you need and enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Lay out the items you have gathered together and display the sign you have made.

For display:

6. Lifting a fatherless society

- In the UK (and many other western nations) the issue of fatherlessness is becoming endemic. Here are some statistics from the Centre for Social Justice and the government:
 - In 2013, there were more than a million children (1 in 5) who had no contact with their fathers. And it was estimated that by mid 2015, there would be more than two million lone parent households as this figure has been rising by 20,000 each year for some years now.
 - More than 3.5 million children are from broken homes and almost half have no effective maintenance agreement. Twenty percent of children from separated families lose contact with the non-resident parent within just three years – this is usually the father.
 - In England and Wales, one in four primary schools has no male teacher and 80% of schools have fewer than three.
 - In some wards of the country, as many as 75% of households with children are headed by lone parents. And in some of the poorest areas of the country, children rarely encounter men because of these combined effects.
- Take a UK map and write one or two of these statistics – and how you feel about them and their effects – onto the map. Allow God to break your heart for what breaks his, and pour out your questions, thoughts and feelings to him in response.
- Now take a sheet of tracing paper and in a different colour, write your vision for a fathered society on to it. Lay it over the top of the UK map and ask God to bring change.
- Before moving on ask God to bring to mind anything he's asking you to commit to pray about regularly about this issue, or if there's anything he's asking you to do.

7. Blessing spiritual fathers

Equipment needed: Bibles, sheets of paper with images of people at different stages of development on them (baby, toddler, child, teenager, young adult, middle aged adult, older person), pens and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Create your image sheet print outs and enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Lay out the image sheets and pens and display the sign you have made.

For display:

7. Blessing spiritual fathers

- Take one of the sheets of paper with the images on showing different stages of a person's life. Next to each one, write down what a child needs from its father/parents. How does this change as the child develops?

- Now look up 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 and Hebrews 5:11-13 and read what these letters have to say about the contrast between what is needed by those who are mature in the life of the spirit, and what is needed by those who are new believers, or not moving forward as hoped.
- Look again at the sheet of paper and think about different stages or seasons of disciples and what the church leaders, mentors, parents and others around them might need to do, teach or give at different stages to support each Christian's development. Jot down any thoughts.
- Now pray for all who act as spiritual fathers:
 - to recognise the stages and seasons different people are at and to lead, mentor, develop, release and receive from accordingly.
 - to be humble, patient, wise and kind and – like Jesus – to be focused on leading people to the Father rather than to themselves.
 - to have father figures around them and – most importantly of all – to prioritise a close relationship with the ultimate Father.

8. Grieving Fathers

Equipment needed: Print outs of psalm 62, highlighter pens and the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Get together the items you need and enlarge and print out a sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Lay out the copies of psalm 62, the pens and display the sign you have made.

For display:

8. Grieving fathers

- Take a few minutes to think of fathers who are grieving because of the loss of their children; the loss of the childhood they had hoped their children would have; disappointment with a path their children have chosen; the state of their relationship; or regrets about the kind of father they were/are.
- Father's Day in the UK always falls close to World Refugee Day (20 June). In 2014, refugee numbers reached the highest they have been since immediately after the Second World War – more than 50 million. Pray particularly for fathers facing impossible decisions in response to conflicts, poverty and seeking asylum or refuge somewhere else.
- Thank God that he sees the secrets of all men's hearts and that he is the ultimate griever and comforter. Thank him too that unlike us he is not overwhelmed by the scale of men and children affected or the depth of their pain.
- Take a copy of psalm 62 and highlight all of the words and descriptions of God in this psalm that speak about comfort, refuge and strength. Now use them to pray over grieving fathers, that they would choose to receive God's love.

9. Turn the hearts of the fathers...

Equipment needed: Two (or multiples of two) figures such as Lego men or Playmobil people and a printout of the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section.

On the day: Stand the pair/each pair of figures back to back and display the sign you have made.

For display:

9. Turn the hearts of the fathers...

- In Malachi 4:6 God promises to turn the hearts of the fathers towards the children, and the hearts of the children towards the father. A setting all things right that echoes both the repeated command for children to honour their parents and the words in Ephesians 6:4 that urge fathers not to exasperate their children.
- Stand your father and child back to back and think particularly of the relationship between teenagers and emerging adults and their fathers... pray for God to open up communication, understanding and above all to restore love... and as you do, turn the figures round to face each other again.
- Do the same for fathers and children of all ages whose relationships have broken down... stand them back to back. And now turn the figures back towards each other again and pray for reconciliation and healing.

10. Father me again

Equipment needed: pens and paper, print outs of the prayer for fathers and fathering available at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/written_prayer_for_Fathers_Day_and_for_all_fathers_every_day.pdf and a printout of the sign you have created using the 'For display' text below.

Instructions for setting up:

In advance: Enlarge and print out the sign using the text in the 'For display' section xxx

On the day: Lay out the copies of the prayer, the pens and paper and display the sign you have made.

For display:

10. Father me again

- Before finishing the stations and leaving the space take a few moments to reflect (and jot down on a piece of paper to take away if it helps you) whether:
 - anything has been stirred up for you personally that you think it would be good to pray through with someone.
 - there is anyone you want to get in touch with to say thank you or sorry to.
 - there is anything God is laying on your heart to continue committing to pray for beyond today.
 - there is anything you particularly want to remember, find out more about or do as a result of today.
- Finally, use the written prayer to bring all your thoughts and prayers together to our perfect Father God.