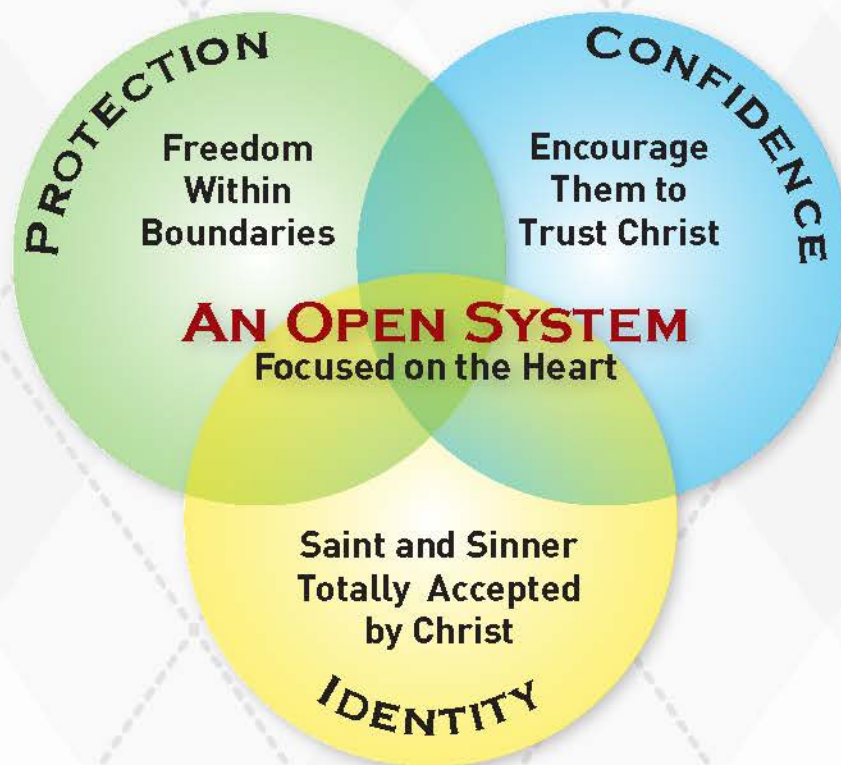


# DADS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE



A SIX-WEEK STUDY TO HELP YOU  
DISCIPLE CHILDREN TO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS.





## What does it mean to be a dad—or grandfather or mentor—that makes a difference?

Ed can only remember his father touching him once. When he was seven, his dad put his hand on Ed's knee to comfort him. What's so amazing about this story is not the absence of physical affection, but that a single touch would still be so vivid 70 years later! (It reminds me—a dad to two young adults—of both the power and the responsibility that comes along with the role of father or father figure.

So how are men doing with this power and responsibility? The bad news is fewer and fewer men are even stepping up to the plate; per a 2016 current population survey by the U.S. Census Bureau, 31% of children under the age of 18 are living without a father in the home. (In 1960, it was just 12%.) But the good news is men who are present in their children's lives today are more actively engaged and involved as fathers.

If you're taking the time to complete this study, you're likely one of the latter. That said, even though most Christian fathers, grandfathers, and mentors would say they love and care about their children deeply, many are operating on autopilot. If you want to be more effective and purpose-driven, this study will provide you with the spiritual and practical tools to get you there. The **primary** purpose of parenting is to create an environment that helps our children be transformed into the image of Christ. As parents, we cannot change our children's hearts; only God can do that. But we can be His instruments in cultivating and shaping those whom He's entrusted to us, and leading them to Him.

Undoubtedly, all of us have made mistakes along the way. But I want to assure you that God's grace is sufficient for all our situations and regrets, and if He's entrusted you with this role, He wants to equip you for it! This workbook can be used for individual study, but ideally, you'll walk through it with a small group of guys.

As you meet each week, you'll get to know each other, and you might find yourself forming deeper bonds of friendship and even brotherhood. Fathering isn't an easy job; we need each other! So lean in, look arms, and fight to make a difference together.

With you in the great adventure,

*Brett Clemmer*

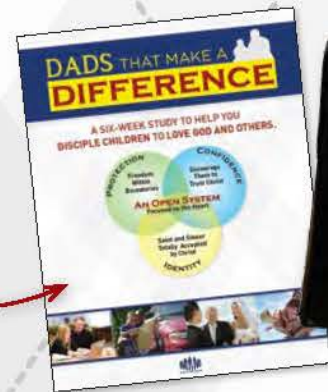
Brett Clemmer  
President, Man in the Mirror

WEEK 1  
WEEK 2  
WEEK 3  
WEEK 4  
WEEK 5  
WEEK 6



Never done  
a Bible study  
before? No  
problem!

You only need two things:  
this workbook and a pen.  
If you want to take extra  
notes or look up additional  
Scripture, bring your Bible  
and a notebook, too!



## HERE'S HOW IT WORKS

Form or join a small group of 4-8 guys to do this study together. Meet weekly for six weeks:

- At home, set aside 30-45 minutes to read through the study for the week, writing down your answers to the questions as you go. Also, work on memorizing the key Bible verse for the week, found under *Memorize This*.
- When you meet with your group, read through the intro story together, found at the top of each week's pages. Review the key Bible verse for the week, and then discuss the *Group Discussion* questions. This is a great time to share with the guys any insights from your week's reading or journaling.
- At the end of the group time, jot down the changes you'd like to make or your right next steps under *My Next Moves to Make a Difference*.
- Pray for your brothers in your group as you go through the study and ask them to pray for you. You can record their contact information on the back of the workbook so that you can check in with each other during the week, too.
- If you're married, regularly share your insights with your wife. If appropriate, involve your children as well!

## FOR THE GROUP FACILITATOR

This workbook is divided into six weeks of study to be completed by a small group.

We recommend a 60-90 minute weekly meeting. A good schedule for a 60-minute meeting is 10 minutes for catching up, 40 minutes for reading and discussion, and 10 minutes for prayer. For a 90-minute meeting, use the extra time for deeper discussion.

When leading discussion, aim to keep the conversation personal and practical, as opposed to purely theological and theoretical. The goal is air time for every man, every week. Encourage each man to share, but don't force it.

Remember—you don't need to be an experienced teacher or Bible scholar to lead a group. The most important parts of your role are to show up, help facilitate discussion, and show guys you care.

The best way to be a leader who makes a difference? Give every man a quick call or text every week to check in and remind him of your meeting.



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This workbook corresponds with the Dads That Make a Difference church event from Man in the Mirror. The event was developed in partnership with Larry Kreider and The Gathering USA, based on the book by Chuck Aycock and Dave Veerman. The Open and Closed Systems model is from Dr. Rod Cooper; we owe a deep debt of gratitude for his insights and generosity.

Creative design for this workbook was done by Cathleen Kwas.



## THE FATHERING IMPRINT



## Memorize This

## Psalm 78:4

We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.

Jim had two younger sisters. Their parents were loving and provided well for them. However, his dad had a hard time relating to his son. With his daughters, he found it natural to be warm and affectionate. For Jim, he had higher expectations and a shorter fuse. Physical affection didn't come easily. Growing up, Jim couldn't articulate these differences; it was just how it was at home. He still knew his dad loved him.

When Jim grew up and started a family, he, too, had an older son and a younger daughter. He was a very involved father when the kids were young, planning birthday parties, coaching little league, and helping with art projects. But he, too, found it difficult to show affection and encouragement to his son. With his daughter, he was tender, patient, and playful, but with his son, he often was harsh and critical. By the teenage years, their relationship was strained at best and volatile at worst. Years later, watching home videos of when his children were little, Jim was genuinely surprised to recognize the difference in how he treated them. He'd had no idea, as he was just repeating the model he'd experienced himself. By then, the damage was done.

## Your Life Experiences

We are all influenced by the circumstances and experiences of our lives. One of the most powerful influences to our fathering is our relationship with our own father.

How would you rate your relationship with your father on the following scale? (Put an X on the line.)

No relationship ----- Ideal relationship

What about your emotional connection?

No connection ----- Very connected

How well do you feel you were prepared to be a father?

Not prepared ----- Well prepared

Almost all men can see their father's impact being played out in their own behavior. For some men, this is a blessing as they see positive values being passed on to the next generation. For others, however, this is painful as they see the hurt and shame of their past repeated in their own efforts as a father.

What is one area of your fathering that has been influenced by your father?

If your relationship with your own father is impacting your fathering, grandfathering, or mentoring in a negative way, you can experience freedom. Here's a four-step process to assist you in addressing the imprint your father left on your life (other men in your group can help you here).

- **Express your feelings to your dad.** Meet face-to-face or write him a letter. Be sure to include gratitude for the good, as well as your hurt over the bad, if there is any. If your dad is deceased or has never been a part of your life, consider writing in a journal.
- **Confess your faults.** No one is perfect. Just as they affected us, our reaction to our fathers likely influenced them. If this applies to your situation, take ownership of any role you might have played.
- **Forgive your father, if necessary.** What does forgiveness not include? Don't condone negative behavior. Don't deny the pain. Instead, face it head on, admit what you have lost, and be willing to move on, with God's help.
- **Commit to the relationship.** Start over where you are now, in whatever ways you can. What really matters is how it ends.



## What the Bible Says About Fathers

Did you ever think about why Jesus wasn't just born to a virgin woman, but instead to a virgin couple? When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant, he planned to divorce her quietly, but God thought it was so important for Jesus to have a human father that he supernaturally intervened to change Joseph's mind. God wanted to model *ideal* humanity, not *broken* humanity.

The family is at the center of God's plan for the world. It is the core unit that He has created to help people enter into a relationship with Him. There is no investment a father can make that will have more impact than his investment in his children. Review these passages and consider what the Bible says about a father:

**Psalm 78:1-8**—Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done. He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, so that they should set their hope



in God and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments; and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to God.

According to this passage, what are we supposed to tell children?

If we do this, what does this passage say the children will do?

**Colossians 3:21**—Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

What are some ways you might provoke your children or grandchildren?

What are some practical ways you can encourage them?

One way to summarize what the Bible says is that fathers should disciple their children to love God and others from the heart. In the next few weeks, you'll discover more about how to do just that.



## Group Discussion

1. Share a story about a man who influenced you when you were growing up. What qualities about him impacted you?
2. In your own words, paraphrase what the Bible says about fathers in these passages. Which aspects come easier to you? What aspects are harder?
3. What legacy has your father left in your life? Have you dealt with any ways he has impacted you negatively? How? If you would like to make a commitment to begin a healing process, why not ask the other men to pray for you?

## My Next Moves to Make a Difference







## Memorize This

## James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

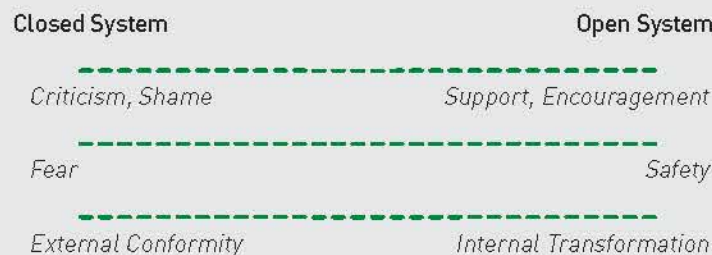
When Scott's three boys were growing up, he and his wife decided to reserve spankings for things that were dangerous. Playing in the street was at the top of the list of possible spanking offenses.

One summer day, when the boys were young, Scott looked out the window to see them sitting on the curb. Technically, they weren't playing in the street, but they did have their legs and feet out in the street. So he went out and asked them to get out of the street. No more than five minutes passed when he turned around to see them back on the curb. This time, he told them to get out of the street with his voice raised. But within minutes, all three of them were once again sitting on the curb. They were being disobedient for the sake of disobedience! Furious, Scott marched down to the street to administer their spankings. At the last second, he felt motivated to ask them what in the world they were thinking sitting on the curb—especially when he'd asked them to not do so! "Well, dad," they said, sheepishly, "we want to be just like the guys who filled the potholes in the street last week. We want to grow up and be street workers. And this is what most of them did!" Scott led the boys away from the curb, before walking back inside, fighting off laughter. No spankings were given out that day.

## Fathering the Heart

Much of what you will be considering throughout this study involves the contrast between an open system and a closed system. In a closed system, the goal or outcome is conformity. Appearances are more important than substance, and external actions are more important than the motivations of the heart. Everyone must play a role for the family to function smoothly, so there tends to be some level of fear and very little flexibility. In an open system, the goal or outcome is transformation, and the heart is the primary concern.

Where do you think your style of fathering, mentoring, or grandfathering ranks in each of the below areas? Don't consider each one too deeply for now, but rather go with your first gut response. (Put an X on the line.)



## The Open System of the Bible

The primary aim we have, as fathers and mentors, should be to disciple our children to love God and others. As we see in the scriptures, this is best accomplished within an open system, as God uses in dealing with us.

**John 8:3-11**—The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her." And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus stood up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

How does Jesus' response to the leaders and to the woman reflect an open system?

When Jesus is arrested and put to death, Peter denies being His follower three times, after having promised to never deny Him. Consider the following conversation Jesus has with Peter after the resurrection:

**John 21:15-17**—When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

The shame Peter carried about denying Jesus must've felt unbearable in this moment. What impact do you think Jesus' words had on him, and how do they reflect an open system?

## Your Family System: Take the Quiz!

Rate each of the below statements on a scale of 1-5, with **1 being NEVER** and **5 being ALWAYS**. (If you have adult children, you may base your answers on how you respond to them now or how you responded to them as they were growing up. Mentors, consider how you respond to those you're mentoring or coaching.)



- ☐ 1. When my children make honest mistakes, I calmly treat them with respect.
- ☐ 2. I allow my children to take risks and make mistakes, helping them experience the consequences.

- ☐ 3. Instead of giving advice or a quick reply, I listen carefully to what my children think and feel.
  - ☐ 4. I know my children's interests and passions and am actively involved in them.
  - ☐ 5. When I discipline, my motivation is to help them become what God wants them to be, not to make my life easier or avoid embarrassment.
  - ☐ 6. When I discipline, I focus on their heart and attitude, as well as the external behavior.
  - ☐ 7. I regularly encourage my children by telling them, "I'm proud of you" and "I love you."
  - ☐ 8. My children feel like they can tell me anything.
  - ☐ 9. I have reasonable expectations of what my children can do, based on their age and maturity.
  - ☐ 10. When I make a mistake with my children, I apologize and ask forgiveness.
  - ☐ 11. Our family has rules that are clearly understood by everyone.
  - ☐ 12. I am willing to change my mind when I better understand a situation.
  - ☐ 13. My children feel free to pursue their dreams—not mine.
  - ☐ 14. My family regularly meets to discuss problems and then works together to overcome them.
- Score: 0-24: Slammed Shut    41-55: Open  
25-40: Opened a Crack    56+: Wide Open



## Group Discussion

1. What aspects of Scott's interaction with his sons demonstrated an open system?
2. What kind of system did you grow up in? How did it impact you?
3. Were you surprised by the results of the quiz? How would you characterize your current family system and why?

## My Next Moves to Make a Difference

