

The Father

(The 4Gs)

**GOD IS... GREAT
GLORIOUS
GOOD
GRACIOUS**

What is God the Father like? And how does knowing him impact our lives?

Scripture

Read the following story that Jesus told that teaches us about God's character through the imagery of a father. What characteristics of the father (and therefore God) are present?

Luke 15:11-32 (The parable of the lost son).

What is the father like in the story?

What single words would you use to describe the father?

How does this differ from what you have previously thought God is like?

Story

This is a true story from a member of our church (names have been changed):

Tim lay awake every night worrying about the debt that he had built up over many years. He would pace the room, unable to sleep. He felt trapped like there was no way out and was irritable and anxious most of the time. He dreaded opening his mail for fear of what might be in the envelope; he was paralysed. He prayed for release and nothing seemed to be changing. Somehow, he had to overcome his anxiety and get some relief from the angry letters, in order to have peace.

One day he shared with a trusted Christian friend, Steve. Steve asked him whether God was greater than the things he feared? Tim realised that his debt had become greater than God in his life. As they talked through the greatness of God, Tim chose to let God increase, and as God expanded, so his fear decreased. God gave Tim the courage to do the 'hard thing', and Steve supported him as he confronted his debt issues. As he dealt with his debt, with the help of a Christian charity, Tim saw God come through for him time and again.

What strikes you about Tim's story?

Are there things in your life that appear greater than God?

How do you think a right understanding of God's greatness might change your situation?

Shape

The **4Gs** is a helpful tool to help us remember four key characteristics of God:

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God is Great – So I don't have to be in control: The God of the universe is very much in charge! We often make the mistake of thinking we can control events, circumstances and other people. When we try to do so, we often fail and become frustrated. In reality, even controlling ourselves is a challenge without the work of God's Spirit. Realising that we must surrender control to God brings enormous peace and freedom and makes us dependent on him.

God is Glorious – So I don't have to fear others: Is there someone whose approval makes you feel like a million dollars and whose disapproval leaves you depressed? The problem here is that our God is too small and our view of others is too big. We need to see again just how big our awesome God is. Would your friend's words have such an impact if the God of Creation was also towering in the room declaring 'I love you, you are mine'?

God is Good – So I don't have to look elsewhere: Where do you go when you feel stressed, anxious and empty? We usually try to fill a void inside with the wrong things. God is able to fill that void and bring peace and contentment. And yet when we don't hold onto this truth, sin is allowed to live in us – with its temporary gratification and false promises – and it kills our joy. God is good and his goodness is sufficient. We don't have to look elsewhere.

God is Gracious – So I don't have to prove myself: As we saw from the story in Luke 15, God doesn't need us, or want us, to prove ourselves to him, or to anyone else. His love is outrageous and undeserved, but this begins by believing this truth and rejecting the lie. The older brother was living as a son in the father's household – a household full of 'unmerited favour' (grace) and yet he is still trying to prove himself and feels overlooked. We can never be satisfied unless we accept the grace of the Father.

The 4Gs are taken from Tim Chester's book *You Can Change* (Crossway Books, 2010).

So What?

In smaller groups, discuss the following questions:

What situations are causing you fear, anger, sadness, pain or frustration at the moment?

Which of the 4Gs do you think you are failing to believe and which might help you if you did?

Pray together that God's Spirit will help you to grow in your assurance that he is great, glorious, good and gracious.

As a whole community, take some time to worship God for how great, glorious, good and gracious he is. You may find reading the following psalms helpful.

- God is GREAT – Psalm 27
- God is GLORIOUS – Psalm 31
- God is GOOD – Psalm 34
- God is GRACIOUS – Psalm 103

Grow Further

Memory Verse:

1 John 3:1

'See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.'

Other Bible verses:

- Isaiah 64:8
- 2 Corinthians 1:3-4
- Hebrews 12:4-12

Other resources:

Tim Chester, *You Can Change* (this book explores the 4Gs further).