

In the beginning of time, before the cosmos swirled about, You Father, Son & Spirit stood on the precipice of humanity & life, ready to call it into existence. Of all the ways you could have created, you chose to speak, to name creation.

Just as you God, chose to name and call out, may we as a community do the same on this Father's Day. May we be people who can name & call out what is good and what is not.

First, to you Fathers who have wholeheartedly embraced the call of Jesus, leaned into the power of the Holy Spirit and reflect the heart of Father God. Bless you!

Bless you for being the reflection of Christ to your children, to your spouses, to children who are not your own and to the community. You are men who actively pursue relationship. You do not shy away from it. You wake in the middle of the night to change a diaper. You come home, although exhausted, to wrestle, listen, & play. You come to important events & take time with each child to see them, not out of obligation; but, because you delight in your children, just as Father God does in you.

You understand that Father is one who moves towards, speaks life and doesn't sit back complacently. Father isn't one who is afraid to show emotion, or extend a warm embrace. You lead with assurance, because you are rooted in the home of the Father's love. When you are out of turn, you are the first to ask for forgiveness and seek reconciliation. You speak hard truth with gentleness and your family can rest in the safety of your love.

To you men, who have fathered the fatherless without ever having your own child. Thank you for not idly sitting by, thinking someone else can do the job of fathering. You have the heart of the Father who heard his people's cries in Egypt. You have come alongside and sheltered the orphan and the widow. You men who love other people's children are like the mighty arm of God who protects them in the cleft of the rock.

Young men of Hillcrest, start now in being intentional by cultivating your heart to be like the Father's heart, knowing that drinking from the cup comes with blood, sweat & tears. May your lips sing, "Oh my strength, I sing praise to you," because it is not by your strength you will father others, it is through God & God alone. May you not wait for tomorrow what you can begin today, by abiding in the Father & asking for the Spirit to guide you.

For those who are missing their father today, may you be showered with comfort & nearness.

Today, we also weep with you dear ones who have never been enough in the eyes of your earthly father. You are loved and enough.

We mourn with you who, rather than being treated as precious children to be cherished have been objects of wrath, abuse and neglect. You are tenderly held by the mighty hand of God, and us.

We ache with you who have not known approval, been loved because you are, and treasured for the gift of being son or daughter.

We grieve because a Father is one who protects, stands in the gap, lays down his life, speaks worth and value into his children. He is not silent or complacent. You who have more scars and wounded memories on this day, may you know what Father is really like. He leaves the home of heaven and moves into the neighborhood, because he loves you. May you know the delight of the Lord as he smiles upon you & sings over you a new song.

Holy Spirit we pray for those with Father wounds, that they would open their hands to relinquish their hurt; rather than hold them tightly and wear them as badges of identity. May they know the freedom of your words from the cross Jesus, "Father forgive them." May you, by the help of the Spirit, release your fathers from the bondage they bound you with.

And you fathers, who are grieved because you haven't lived up to the call of Father, and it has caused wounds to your child. I pray that today would be a new day for you. May you see that the grace of God is further from the east is to the west. May you understand how the Father runs to wipe away your debt, to embrace you & to shower you with forgiveness & love. Not by anything you've done; but, because you are his child. May you receive his grace & salvation.

Men of Hillcrest, may each of you be like the Father who says come. Be men who reflect the love of the Father, and the welcome of Jesus. May you be men who walk humbly with gentle strength and stand upon injustice. May you be visionaries and leaders who empower, build others up & bring reconciliation. May you be men who are full of the Spirit & prayer, calling out & naming what is good & what is evil. May you lead as Jesus did, a servant leader who led as the washer of feet. It is by God's faithful, sacrificial love we pray. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.