

**The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A pastoral foundation for
Fathering**

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**This study is dedicated to my own father, the father of my heart, Diederikus Pieter
(Erik) Terburgh.**

It's nearly 20 years later and I still miss you every day.

**Thank you for loving me in such a way that I could see my heavenly Father in your
eyes.**

I promised you I would – and here it is.

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Erika I. Parker
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ABSTRACT

The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A pastoral foundation for Fathering

The central theoretical argument of this study proposes that God reveals Himself to man through the biblically presented metaphor of Father, as portrayed by the Biblical covenants between God and man.

The primary aim of this research is to describe the Biblical attributes of God the Father as a foundation of fathering. In order to achieve this objective, the study aims to identify what Scripture revealed about the attributes of God as our Father. It also investigates the ancient patriarchal traditions pertaining fatherhood and delves into what contemporary Christian literature proposes about the important aspects of fathering. It also proposes that such revealed attributes can serve as a foundation for human parents (which include fathers) to better understand the important aspects that they need to consider in order to father their own children with greater consistency according to the image of their heavenly Father.

After delving into Scripture, the two relevant meta-theoretical fields of psychology and sociology were investigated to see what each respective field has put forth about the importance of a father who engages with his children in specific ways. An empirical research followed where participants answered open-ended questions that address their impressions about their own fathers or male role-models, God as their Father and what effect they think fathering has had on them. From there, the empirical research validated certain recurrent attributes which were also verified through a process of triangulation, what has been found in Scripture and the meta-theory about the important attributes of God as Father. The results of the interaction lead to a proposition of a model of pastoral foundation for fathering.

Keywords:

God as Father, covenant, fathering, pastoral, attributes, foundation.

OPSOMMING

Die kenmerke van God die Vader in die verbond: 'n pastorale basis vir vaderskap

Die sentrale teoretiese argument van hierdie studie voer aan dat God Homself aan die mens openbaar deur die Bybelse metafoor van die Vader, soos uitgebeeld deur die Bybelse verbonde tussen God en mens.

Die primere doel van hierdie navorsing is om die Bybelse kenmerke van God te beskryf as 'n basis vir vaderskap. Ten einde hierdie doelwit te bereik, poog die studie eerstens om te identifiseer wat die Skrif bekendmaak aangaande die kenmerke van God as Vader. Verder ondersoek dit die antieke patriargale tradisies aangaande vaderskap, en evalueer wat kontemporere Christelike literatuur daarstel oor die belangrike aspekte van vaderskap. Die studie stel voor dat hierdie geopenbaarde kenmerke kan dien as 'n basis vir menslike ouers (insluitende vaders) met betrekking tot die belangrike aspekte wat hulle moet in ag neem om vir hulle kinders vaders te wees met meer standvastigheid in navolging van die beeld van hulle hemelse Vader.

Na 'n studie van die Skrif, word die twee relevante meta-teoretiese velde van psigologie en sosiologie ondersoek om te sien wat elke veld op die tafel sit met betrekking tot die belangrikheid van 'n vaders wat op spesifieke wyses met sy kinders omgaan. Dit word gevolg deur empiriese navorsing waartydens deelnemers oop-eindigende vrae beantwoord het. Die vrae het betrekking gehad om hulle indrukke van hulle eie vaders of manlike rolmodelle, God as Vader en watter effek hulle dink vaderskap op hulle gehad het. Uit die empiriese navorsing is sekere herhalende kenmerkende geïdentifiseer, wat verder bevestig is 'n proses van triangulasie, wat in die Skrif daaroor gese word en die meta-teorie oor die belangrike kenmerke van God die Vader. Die resultate van die interaksie het gelei tot 'n voorstelling van 'n model van pastorale basis vir vaderskap.

Sleutelwoorde:

God as Vader, verbond, vaderskap, pastoraal, eienskappe, fondasie.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Title

The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A pastoral foundation for fathering.

1.2 Problem statement and research questions

1.2.1 Problem statement

During the last ten years of consulting in clinical practice, I have become aware of the growing amount of families facing the dilemma of absent, abusive or disinterested, uninvolved fathers (Kettermann, 2002:8-11; Freeks, 2004:34 & 35). A father's involvement, starting even before the birth of a child, is very important for the child's development. The father's subsequent involvement over the years to follow also makes a significant contribution to how the child develops psychologically and physically in terms of, for instance, gross motor coordination, leading to how the child grows up to understand social roles within peer groups and the broader society (Moore et al., 1996: 53-55). Families with fathers who are more actively involved in their families find that their families display an over-all combination of healthier traits and are more likely to have improved life skills than the families whose fathers are more uninvolved (Parke, 2006:24).

Within families where the family unit has disintegrated through divorce, death or other factors to the extent that children have been left totally fatherless, the development and socialization of a child is likely to become significantly impaired. In these situations socialization skills are often either left to the child to develop by themselves or to the remaining members of the family whose aid is often impaired or limited as well (Marsiglio, 1995:41-43).

In developing countries like Asia, Africa and Latin America, at least one hundred million children under the age of eighteen, with some children being as young as three years old, live and work on the streets. These are children who live life without the safety of a family unit that has the protection and containment of a father figure, whether biological

or as a stepfather or male role-model. According to UNICEF, there are 7, 5 million homeless children living and working on the streets of Brazil alone. These children engage in subsistence activities such as begging, shining shoes and selling trinkets to help supplement their often single parent family's income. A third or more of these children have no family and are totally destitute, living in parks, under bridges or in abandoned buildings (Bateson & Martin, 1999:120-121).

When looking at the South African situation in 2002, statistics indicate that 37% of households in South Africa survived on less than R1000 per month; that life expectancy had fallen from 62 years in 1990 to 48 in 1999 as a consequence of HIV/Aids; and it was estimated that 13% of the total population and 25% of adults in South Africa are HIV-positive (Woolard, 2002:1). Furthermore, statistics indicate that a 28% probability of poverty existed when a household was headed by a resident male versus a 53% probability when a female headed the household due to the nominal male head being absent (Woolard, 2002:3).

When viewing poverty in South Africa it still remains imperative to reduce the proportion of people living in extreme poverty (May, 2006:143), for even in a post-Apartheid South Africa, the government states that it is their objective to at least halve the number of those living in extreme poverty, to attempt to reduce the infant and under-five mortality rate by two-thirds and the maternal mortality rate by three-fourths. All these objectives aim to in some way regain control over the calamities that strike those who are poor (May, 2006: 143).

Looking at current statistics, the HIV-infection rates in S.A. are proposed to currently constitute 19.94% of the total population (Fourie & Schonteich; 2007:5) whilst current HIV/Aids rates are still constantly climbing at an ever accelerating pace. The region of Southern Africa remains the worst hit area in the world, accounting for over one-third of all new infections and deaths globally (Cullinan, 2007). It is estimated that the number of South African paternal orphans under the age of 18 years will peak at a minimum of 4.7 million in 2015.

None of the above figures include a calculation of children who have been left without paternal care by fathers who are still alive, but who are absent from their children's lives

(Johnson & Dorrington, 2001:16). The absence of a father tends to be significantly destabilizing to a family, as can be seen from these statistics. However, the absence of a whole family unit could totally devastate a child's need to find security in the safe and containing relationships that need to exist within a more complete family system (Olivier, 1997:19). Keeping in mind that the loss or absence of a father tends to destabilize a family's sense of safety and containment, today's high divorce rates and absent fathers who over-prioritize their jobs still further compromise the children within these families' emotional and physical needs.

These statistics, coupled with an insufficient understanding of what God reveals about His attributes as the Father of all (Eph. 4:6), has brought fathers to an impoverished understanding of the important attributes that fathers need in order to father their children in keeping with the attributes of their heavenly Father (Mc Clung, 1985:35-47, Trent, 1996:5-16). Scripture states that God is the heavenly Father who wants us to be perfect like Him (Mt.6:1) and that He is the one true Father (Mt. 23:9). Christ repeatedly confessed that the will of the Father needs to be sought (John 8:38). Interestingly, He also states that the Son reveals the Father and the Father reveals the Son (John 14:7-11). Christ repeatedly reiterates that it is important that we should know the Father who sent Him (John 5:37), seeing that He is the only true Father (Mt. 23:9).

An increasing amount of literature has been published both on the subjects of fathering as well as on the fatherhood of God, yet an integrative study concerning the attributes that God reveals about Himself as our Father made possible through His repetitive offering of Covenant to man (Mc Comiskey, 1985:179 -192; Palmer-Robertson, 1982:67-92), is still lacking, for too often do men revert back to that which is written in Psychology about who and what they should aspire to as fathers to their children. One also has to consider that the image through which God has chosen to portray Himself to us is that of being our Father. This image is presented to us as a biblical metaphor, necessitating a brief enquiry into biblical metaphors. H. Goede (2007:1) writes that when one considers the amount of metaphors in the New Testament, one feels it necessary to acknowledge its contribution to the transmission of the message of Scripture. Goede notes that it seems to be more frequently believed that metaphors can be seen as literary expressions that have scientific usability within theological studies (Gunton, cited in Goede, 2007:1). Yet, there are those who reason that the divine can only be described

and understood by human beings through the use of earthly associations (Van der Watt, 2000:22) or through the use of metaphors that serve to describe in the natural that which exists in the super-natural. Consider the concept of God within the metaphor of "Father." The image or metaphor of a father carries a certain natural understanding, and with God presenting Himself as the Father from whom all things come and for whom we exist (1 Cor. 8:6a), man's natural understanding of what a father is, can more easily be transferred to God.

In the light of this, Van der Watt (2000:6) proposes a theory of metaphor that is based on a functional description of metaphor, where metaphor functions to bring into existence a new meaning constructed out of the integrations of the pre-existing meanings of two selected items in lexicon. Van der Watt reasons that this transference and integrative construction of a new meaning happens when that which is said is attached, through identification or comparison, to that which is meant. Analogies are also seen as playing a significant role, seeing that the image of a father can be viewed as an analogy through which the reader can understand through the transference of his own human meanings around what a father is to God as Father (Van der Watt, 2000:7). Goede subscribes to van der Watt's theory of metaphor, for he agrees that not only does van der Watt succeed in integrating all the important aspects of metaphor, but both Goede and Van der Watt attribute great importance to understanding Biblical metaphor as the transference of meaning from the natural into the super-natural (Goede, 2007:16).

Within the biblical metaphor that God has chosen to present Himself to us, He has portrayed Himself through utilizing the primary image of Father (Louw, 1997:75). Specifically, as "our Father" of whom Scripture refers to as the father from whom all families take their names (Eph. 3:15) and into whose likeness we need to be restored (John 14:7), for a child is like his father (John 8:38). Still, the image of God as Father, as an analogy or biblical metaphor (Louw, 1997:64-79), has yet been left relatively under-explored in comparison with the volumes that have been written about parenting within the Christian arena (Mac Donald, 1986:21-28; Prince, 2000:50; Hamrin, 2002:21-30), whilst even the traditional Jewish customs of Bar/Bat mitzvah further reinforce the significance that Jews place on fathering a daughter or a son throughout the ages (Donin, 1977:68; Kushner, 1989: 21-45).

This study will include an investigation that aims to identify the attributes that God reveals about Himself as our Father (2 Cor.3). Understanding these attributes can offer human fathers a better understanding of the important aspects that need to be included in fatherhood so that the generations to come can be fathered from a more solid Biblically founded image of fathering. Scripture highlights that we, as covenant children of God are called into being conformed into the image of Christ (1 Cor.15: 49), who carries the image of His Father (John 14:7). In ancient patriarchal traditions it was the custom to enquire about a person's identity through asking whose son or daughter he or she was, as we can see in the genealogies in Scripture or the referrals made to, for instance, the sons of Zebedee (Mt.4:21). In those times, the identity of a child lay in the name of the child's father, just so with us today.

Contemporary authors (Sandford & Sandford, 1979:166-175; Mol, 1984:8-12; Dobson, 1987:89; Brueggemann, 1997:359-399; Hanekom, 2002:61-66) continuously publish on the important aspects involved in fathering in an attempt to aid the development of a healthier understanding of fathering within an already disintegrative post-modern society where absent fathers, single and divorced mothers, broken families and stepfathers are more the norm than the exception to the rule (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:435-438). The effects of these family situations reverberate throughout not only the whole of the family, affecting the adults as well, but also penetrates the wider community through increasing crime statistics, rising numbers of juvenile delinquents, increasing loss of self-control, immaturity and irresponsibility to name but a few (Anon, 1987:11-16; Lupton & Barclay, 1997:2; Staples, 1999:55).

The secular fields of psychology, sociology and criminology confirm an alarming increase in the disintegration of family structures over especially the last generation (Connell, 2000:7). These figures can be combined with a rise in fatherless children, whether through separation, divorce, death, illegitimacy, work addiction, disinterest, neglect, abuse or abandonment of the home and its children (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:229-231).

All of these aspects point towards and highlight the importance of addressing the spreading problem of erroneous or inadequate fathering in families. Following from this, it is subsequently proposed that a better understanding of the biblically revealed

attributes of God as our Father, as revealed to mankind through His Covenant with us, will serve to enlighten and direct the roads to be traveled by human fathers with their own children.

1.2.2 Research Questions

Over-arching Research Question:

“What attributes do God reveal about Himself as Father through the Covenant we have with Him, and what pastoral foundation does this lay for fathering?”

1.2.2.1 *Basis theory*

- What do the Old and the New Covenant reveal about the attributes of God as our Father?
- What do the ancient patriarchal traditions and contemporary Christian literature reveal about the important aspects involved in human fathering?

1.2.2.2 *Meta-theory*

- What do the fields of psychology and sociology reveal about the important aspects involved in fathering?
- What will a qualitative empirical research study, utilizing an open-ended questionnaire, reveal about the participants' impressions of the image they hold of their own biological fathers or male role-models, their impressions of the attributes of God as Father, as well as their resulting perceptions of important aspects involved in fathering?

1.2.2.3 *Practice theory*

- What would an understanding of the attributes contained in God as Father reveal about a pastoral foundation for human fathering?

1.3 Primary aim and objectives

1.3.1 Primary Aim

The primary aim of this pastoral study is to describe the Biblical attributes of God the Father as a foundation for fathering.

1.3.2 Objectives

The specific objectives of this study are divided into basis theoretical objectives and meta-theoretical objectives:

1.3.2.1 *Basis theoretical objectives*

- To identify what the biblical covenants between God and man reveal about the attributes of God as our Father.
- To investigate what ancient patriarchal traditions and contemporary Christian literature say about the important aspects of human fathering.

1.3.2.2 *Meta-theoretical objectives*

- Meta-theoretical objective 1
To investigate what the fields of psychology and sociology say about the important attributes of human fathering.
- Meta-theoretical objective 2
To investigate perceptions about fathering through the use of a qualitative study, to ascertain how fathers perceive their own biological fathers or male role-models; their perceptions of the attributes of God the Father, and their resulting perceptions of the important attributes of a father.

1.3.2.3 *Practice-theoretical objective*

- The objective is to integrate that which the Biblical Covenants reveal about the attributes of God the Father, with what meta-theoretical views and the results of the qualitative study reveal, so as to propose a pastoral foundation for fathering.

1.4 Central theoretical argument

The central theoretical argument of this study proposes that God reveals Himself through the metaphor of our Father, which is made possible through the Biblical covenants between God and man. The argument also proposes that such revealed attributes can serve as a foundation for human fathers to better understand the important aspects that they need to consider in order to father their own children according to a greater consistency with the image of their own heavenly Father.

1.5 Methodology

The relevant research model that will be utilized within this study is the model developed by Zerfass (Heitink, 1999:113), which is found in the domain of practical theology. It consists of a basis-theory, a meta-theory and a practical theory (Heyns and Pieterse, 1998:34, 35; van der Walt, 2007:21-24). The study will be conducted through the use of the following research methods in addressing the previously defined research questions under heading marked as 3. The New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, 1995 will be utilized in this study.

1.5.1 Basis theoretical methodology

The basis theoretical question will be researched through utilizing the relevant Scriptural expository approaches (Van der Walt, 2007:21-24).

1.5.2 Meta-theoretical methodology

- The methodology that will be used in the first meta-theoretical question will include a literature study of the relevant literature within the defined fields of psychology and sociology.
- The methodology that will be used in the second meta-theoretical question will include open-ended questionnaires with men that focus on their impressions about God the Father and their own father's fathering.

1.5.3 Practice-theoretical methodology

The proposed foundation for fathering will be formed through an integration of relevant Scripture expositions, hermeneutical interaction, a literature study, the structured interviews to formulate a pastoral foundation for fathering.

1.5.4 Technical Aspects

- In this study, when referring to the personal pronoun "he" or the possessive pronoun "his," the feminine form will be included.
- The New International Version (NIV) will be used for references from the Bible, unless otherwise indicated.
- The abbreviations for the books of the Bible are according to the NIV.
- This study will be done in accordance with the guidelines required by the Research Ethics Committee of the North West University.

1.6 Chapter division

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Basis Theoretical Perspectives on Covenant

Chapter 3: Attributes of God as Father in Scripture and Fathering in the Ancient Patriarchal Tradition as compared to contemporary Christianity

Chapter 4: Meta-theoretical perspectives on fathering.

Chapter 5: Qualitative research of impressions regarding the perceived attributes involved in fathering.

Chapter 6: Practice-theoretical perspectives on fathering.

Chapter 7: Summary and conclusion: collective inference of preliminary conclusions, final conclusions and suggested topics for further research.

CHAPTER 2

BASIS THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON COVENANT

2.1 Introduction

Venter (1993:247) explains that basis theory means the expounding of theological perspectives that are derived primarily from Scripture (cf Campbell-Lane, 2003:12). Chapter 2 starts with an exploration into man's formation in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). From thereon the chapter looks into some of the important aspects of God's covenant with man. This includes an investigation into some of the roots of what the word "covenant" in the Hebrew and the Greek refer to, something that is important to the rest of this study. The chapter will continue to consider the fact that man's formation in the image of God puts him in a natural relationship and in covenant with God, because God is his Creator. Further objectives within this chapter will include an investigation into the history of covenant, which will be followed by a look into the background of the formation of the Biblical covenants. Here, the study will compare the parallels between the general forms of the Hittite vassal treaties and God's covenantal formulary. Such a comparison will help to ascertain whether there is any truth in the opinion that the Abrahamic Covenant followed these vassal treaty formularies.

Following the investigation into the historical context and the differing formularies, the chapter presents an overview of the various Old Testament covenants, starting with the Covenant of Creation, the Adamic Covenant, the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Mosaic Covenant (also referred to as the Law of Sinai) and the Davidic Covenant, which will lead up to and include the New Testament covenant.

2.2 Man in the Image of God

"It pleased God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of His eternal power, wisdom, and goodness, in the beginning, to create, or make of nothing, the world, and all things therein whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days; and all very good. After God had made all other creatures, He created man, male and female... after His own image."

(Westminster Confession of Faith, IV/i-iii, cited in Reymond, 1998: 383).

This confession concerning the image of God in man captures the very heartbeat of the biblical view of man who has been created in the image of God (Gen.1: 26, 27). Yet, its full and precise meaning still remains cloaked in the mystery that constitutes our humanity (Ps. 139: 13-18). This mystery can be seen consistently throughout Scripture when considering references to man as "*Imago Dei*" (image of God) such as those found in Gen. 5:1; 9:6; Ps. 8 or James 3:9 (Spykman, 1992:223). In the Biblical text both the words "in the image" (*tselem, eikon*) and "after the likeness" (*Demuth, homoiosis*) of God (cf Genesis 1:26, 27) occur, with only man having been created in the image of God. Grudem (1994:442-443) points out that it is possible to define "in the image of God" as man being "like" God and "representing" God. In this sense then, both of these Hebrew words refer to something that is similar, but not identical to that which it represents. An example of what the difference between "image" and "likeness" means can be seen in Gen. 5:3: "And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years and begot a son, in his own likeness (*Demuth*), after his image (*tselem*) and named him Seth." Seth was not physically identical to his father, Adam, but did take after his father as a son is like his father.

Grudem proposes five aspects in which it is possible for man to be like God (Grudem, 1994:445-448):

- Moral aspects: We are accountable to God; and like God, we have an inner sense of right and wrong.
- Spiritual aspects: Like God, we own immaterial spirits that operate in the spiritual dimension.
- Mental aspects: Like God, we have the ability to reason and think logically.
- Relational aspects: Like God, we have the ability to relate to each other and to God, and to stand in relationship to the rest of creation.
- Physical aspects: Like God, we have the ability to hear, see and feel.

When God created man as His final creative act, this creative act formed a high point in God's creative process of the earth and the heavens (Von Rad, cf Berkhouwer, 1962:70). Some of the substantiation for this opinion comes from the creation of man occurring as the last major event on the sixth day of the creation week, which can also be seen as the climax of God's activity in preparing His creation before creating man (Reymond, 1998:416). Adam, before the fall of man, lived in unclouded fellowship with

God and no creature could be compared to him for no other creature had been created in the likeness of God. He was a magnificent creation, complete and perfectly crafted and molded by God's own hands into the image of God Himself, so as to reflect onto creation the glory of God. In this way, man had to be the showcase for the glorious character of God (McGee, 1988:16).

Before the fall of man into sin and corruption, man possessed religious knowledge, righteousness and holiness, as well as conformity (*conformitas*) to God's will, for he was still wholly turned towards God. Man was originally formed in the image of God with his understanding adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and therefore his heart and will was upright and all his affections were pure, because the whole man was holy (Berkhouwer, 1962: 38, 39). After the fall of man, human beings still exhibited the capacity for moral responsibility (Ziebertz et al., 2001:35), but needed to start exercising more of their will in the direction of morality.

It was Augustine who stated that the glory of Adam lay in him, having been created in the image of God, and that this image rested not in his body, but in his soul. He wrote that Adam was created with a rational soul that possessed all the faculties of understanding, memory and free will (Needham, 2000:31).

As referred to earlier, man's creation is the climax of God's creative process, with man as a unique creature among all created things (Leith, 1993:99). This positions mankind in a uniquely defined relationship with God. In Gen. 2 God confirms His wish to build relationship with man, with God expressing the need that progressive correspondence between Him and man can take place (Westermann, 1984:157-158). Since man has been created by God and for God and in God's image, mankind is fundamentally answerable and responsible to the Creator Himself (Ziebertz, Schweitzer, Haring and Browning, 2001:67). In this sense then, human beings owe God their obedience and relational involvement simply on the basis of the Creator-creature relationship, and not solely on the basis of the covenant that God established with Adam (Berkhouwer, 1962:75).

Seeing the human being as a creation (*ktisis, creatura*) of God, Price (2002:99) proposes that the human being primarily be considered from within the context of his relationship

to God. Barth points out that the human being, as creature of God, is in need of constant relationship with the Creator, for he writes: *"Like the beast, man is formed of dust, animated by God and destined to return to dust and non-existence. But in contrast to the beast, he is animated by God directly and personally. Of all creatures he is chosen and called by Him immediately. And he stands or falls by reason of the fact that God does not abrogate this relationship to him but maintains and continues it"* (Barth, cf Price, 2002: 99,100). Barth writes that man would not be man if he were not created in the image of God and that the meaning of the image that the "I" carries, being the image of a divine Creator, can only be found in relation to a "Thou" or God.

God's creation and instruction of mankind, whilst sustaining man through His ordinary and general providence, has brought mankind as a whole under the obligation to relate to their Creator as He wishes and to obey His requirements (Leith, 1993: 100-103). If then the human being, as *"Imago Dei"* (Jonsson, 1988:26-28 & 65-76), who is answerable to the requirements of his Creator, chooses to step out of his Creator's requirements, the relationship will be affected and only an initiative from the Creator is able to offer restoration. This is what happened with the fall of man (Gen. 3). Here God not only brought consequence, but also followed His post-fall stance up by reaching out to man repeatedly through both the Old Testament covenants as well as the New Covenant of Grace, in order to re-establish reconciliation through offering a covenant to man at various times in the Old and the New Testaments.

It is from this point of reasoning that it is written:

"The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant."

(Westminster Confession of Faith, VII/I; cf Reymond, 1998:404).

Barth (Price, 2002:117, 118) denies that human beings possess an inherent *a priori* potential to form a relationship with God. It is in this light that the Word of God can be seen as an initiative that aims at setting the human being aside for a relationship with God, for it is the Word that offers the establishment of such a relationship. As God

speaks His Word, He not only establishes facts, but also reveals the truth about how He reaches out to the human creature in His Word, through His covenants.

On closer inspection of the covenants in Genesis (Gen. 12:1; 17:1), it becomes clear that an imperative dimension is included, for Yahweh's covenant partner is expected to live life in ways that are appropriate to the relationship with a Creator God who is holy, glorious and jealous, as Creator of heaven and earth. Such an intense and primary relationship contains dimensions of conditionality for the redemptive purpose of God and lies at the centre of mankind's history. It is from this specific vantage point that the study now approaches covenant (Brueggemann, 1997:419; Reymond, 1998: 416-418).

Throughout history, God has related to mankind by utilizing two foundational covenantal arrangements, firstly the Covenant of works, also referred to as the Law (*mitzvoth*) in the Old Testament, and secondly the Covenant of Grace in the New Testament. After man had come under the Covenant of works through his fall, God offered to man, through the death of Christ on the cross (Matt. 27: 45-56), a new covenant that is known as the Covenant of Grace. When the term "God" is used in the discussion, it refers to all three members of the Trinity, seeing that although each member of the Godhead is able to at any time function independently, each member does not exist completely separate from one another, but instead exists in relationship to the other members in the Godhead (Lotter, 1993: 14).

2.3 Man and God in Covenant

As referred to above, God essentially chose to create man in His own likeness and image; and in doing so He established a unique relationship with man (Gen.1:26, 27). Following this sovereign creation-act, God spoke to man in order to convey the role that God wished him to play in creation. God established a life-bond between Him and man through the initial creation of a relationship between them. This life-bond is referred to as the *covenant of creation*, which is also sometimes referred to as the *covenant of commencement* (Robertson, 1984:93).

Covenant played a very significant role in ancient Israel, for through it man was able to establish and re-establish a relationship with God. It is crucial for us to understand that the God from whom the covenantal idea originated is One who is a "not-us"; One whom

we are accountable to, One who commands us and from whom we receive our very lives (Brueggemann, 1999:1-18). The principle of "I-Thou," as seen in Buber's work (1937), first put forth this thought that the human self does not exist as an independent, autonomous agent, stating instead that man is invariably preceded by a "Thou" who is radically different from man - evoking and summoning man into existence. This "Thou" or "Other," echoes Brueggemann, is an endlessly inscrutable mystery to us and is therefore endlessly problematic for us to escape from, to seduce, to capture or possess; for the "Other" is autonomous and prescriptive and absolutely free (Brueggemann, 1999:1-18).

God as the "Thou" or "Other" has, through His own sovereign decision chosen to reveal Himself to us as a God who reaches out to man to do him good, progressively revealing Himself as a father who loves responsibly (Buchanan, 1970:300-301).

On closer investigation we see that the covenant relationship that God had with His people, He had made available to them through the taking of an oath, since it was He who chose His people as the ones to be loved by Him. God chose to approach Abraham (Gen.12), to involve Himself with man; and gave an invitation to him to be part of a covenant relationship with God. In this initiative from God, He shows Himself to be a God who wants a relationship with man and who thereafter repetitively proves His faithfulness to His covenant with man.

The root of the word "covenant" stems from the word "*Berit*" in Hebrew and the word "*Diatheke*" in Greek. The Greek lexicon speaks of two words, "*Sintheke*" and "*Diatheke*". The word "*Sintheke*" is a word that points towards a joint effort between two parties who both decide to initiate a covenant with each other (Tenney, 1967: 186). The word "*Diatheke*" refers to a "testament" in the Septuagint (Van Gemeren, 1997:746). It also points towards the mono-pluric character of God, who independently from man initiates the covenant with man from His side. In the process of *Diatheke*, man's sole contribution lies in his reaction to God's invitation by either deciding to accept or reject the invitation to a covenantal relationship, seeing that the initiative lies solely with God to offer man His independently formed invitation - making it a di-pluric process (Heyns, 1981:202).

It is from this perspective then that the concept of covenant in the Old Testament can be seen as presenting an expression of the will of God as the principle partner, who institutes the covenant with mankind as the inferior partner (Eichrodt; 1961:137-146). Begrich (1964:55-66) is of the opinion that God's special protection of and union with man is without any demands on or conditions towards man as the subordinate party. McCarthy (1973:2) suggests that it is without any expression of a willing acceptance on man's side. On the other hand, Brueggemann (1997: 413-449) strongly insists that even though it is true that the Almighty does initiate the covenant, the human partner is most certainly required to not only respond to the divinely extended invitation, but is also obliged to obey God's covenantal requirements. Kline (cf Reymond, 1998:433) writes that we need to recognize that God's justice is defined and judged in terms of what He stipulates in His covenants.

Furthermore, the meaning of the word "*berit*" holds locked-up in itself a complex nature (Coetzee, 1995:64), for even though various individual meanings have been listed; a more comprehensively defined meaning for the word "covenant" still remains inadequate to describe the full concept (De Vuyst, 1964:21). Even the root meaning of the Hebrew word "*berit*" *tirb* continues to be essentially unclear, though various interpretations have been ascribed to it over many years. Theologians like Mendenhall (1955a: 715-716) initially connected the root of the word "covenant" with an Assyrian word referring to a "fetter" or "bond;" thus stressing the binding quality of the covenant. Following Mendenhall, Baltzer (1960:13) proposes that the root of the word could be derived from a word meaning "to cut", emphasizing a sacrificial ceremony as found in the expression "to cut a covenant."

McCarthy (1963:51, 52) retains the idea of cutting, but insists that the emphasis be shifted from the sacrificial elements to the sharing of the common meal, whilst Rogers (1970: 241-244) proposes that covenant be seen as an agreement between two parties comprising of certain component parts, i.e. a *Bundesformular*, which would then be concluded or consummated by certain ceremonial acts.

Rogers (1970:241-244) mentions three prominent features:

- An agreement which binds the two parties together.
- The form or component parts of the agreement.

- The concluding ceremony.

Somewhat more recently, Van Gemeren (1997:750-753) proposed that after investigating the obscurity surrounding the etymology of the word covenant, the meaning of the covenant in the Old Testament could perhaps best be determined through a closer look into its usage. Van Gemeren's survey found the character of the word "covenant" to point towards a consistent and mutual commitment, which recognizes both the initiative of God in its arrangement as well as the reality and necessity of human choice. Still other theologians like Vos (1980:597) see the essential element within the covenantal process as the absolute confirmation of the covenantal requirements by means of a religious ceremony which introduces the divine element of God's involvement that secures stability to the covenant and gives the covenant its specific character.

God's covenant with Israel contained an expression of His will through His Law or Torah, which guided Israel's actions and brought a feeling of confidence in the consistency of who God is. The Law also upheld the requirements that God commanded Israel to fulfill, so that God would not withdraw His blessings (Brueggemann, 1997:413-449). Thus, the covenantal relationship between God and His people was a very specific and personal relationship that involved the totality of the person in covenant with God (Spykman, 1992:355).

The Old Testament prophets proclaimed a clear understanding of God's covenant through their ethical insistence on mono-theism and their message that union with God was a matter of morality, not of natural relationship or of magical rite (Mc Carthy, 1973:18). Covenant with God was an absolute condition for the Israelites, for Israel remained God's special friend or covenant partner only for so long as Israel kept their obligation to adhere to God's Laws, in order to remain His covenant partner (Brueggemann, 1997:413-449). Failure to comply with the duties of the covenant stipulations would lead to God withdrawing His favor and further negative consequences would result as per God's stipulations for their covenant-breaking (Eichrodt, 1961: 137-146).

Through God's creation of man in His own likeness, a relational bond or covenant of commencement had been established (Heyns, 1981:201), although the term itself can

only first be found in Gen.6:17, 18 when God speaks to Noah. In His communication with Noah, God informs Noah not only of His intentions to destroy all flesh, but also of His intention to establish His covenant with Noah (Dumbrell, 1984:11). Following Genesis 6, Scripture continuously testifies to the importance of divine covenants, in which God repeatedly entered into covenantal relationships with, for instance, Abraham (Gen.15:18), Israel (Exod.24:8) and David (Ps. 89:3). The prophetic message of the New Covenant was brought by prophets like Ezekiel (Ez. 36:26,27) and Jeremiah (Jer. 31:31, Jer. 34); of whom Christ Himself spoke of at the Last Supper (Luke: 22:20). The process of God instituting covenant can thus be seen at various times in Scripture. A definition of the term must allow for as much latitude as is displayed in Scripture, whilst not losing sight of God's covenantal relationships with His people. Robertson states that covenant is a "bond-in-blood," i.e. a bond that is sovereignly administered in blood, through which Robertson (1982: 7-15) proposes that when God enters into a covenantal relationship, He sovereignly institutes and administers a life-and-death bond through the spilled blood, whether through the five cut animals and birds in Gen.15 or in the circumcision of the foreskins in Gen.17 (Williamson, 2000:78-120).

Covenant can be seen as one of the significant themes of the Pentateuch, although perhaps not as Eichrodt (1961: 36-69) believes, the center or the controlling idea of all Old Testament theology. Robertson (1982:171) wrote that covenant is the larger concept that takes preference over law, for covenant binds persons together, whilst externalized legal stipulations only represent one mode of administration of the covenantal bond. Le Roux (1991: 4) supports Robertson's reasoning, stating that covenant could be seen as a comprehensive concept within which various facets of the Scriptural message could be integrated meaningfully. The search for a central theme still remains problematic (Hasel, 1991, 139-171), for even though different themes, i.e. the Kingdom of God, carry much importance, neither the covenantal themes nor the Kingdom theme can be seen as the absolute and central biblical theme, for all of God's ways cannot be contained in either, although both can definitely be seen as representing central themes that bring more insight into God's relationship with creation and mankind (Helberg, 1996:235).

An important element that will be discussed later in this chapter is that of the relationship between the covenantal partners through what is referred to as "*hesed*," namely God's

covenant loyalty, also referred to as His steadfast love. In I Samuel 20:8 "*hesed*" can be seen as a protective action (Brown, 1975:367) with the covenant being an expression of God's extending of His grace and love to man, whilst requiring man's sacrificial response (Van der Walt, 1999:203).

2.4 The History of Covenant

The history of covenant points towards a firmly established relationship between two or more parties which exist beyond law or nature. It includes some thought of amity between the parties, which is expressed through such terms as "peace", "brotherhood" or even "love" (Mitchell, 1969:25-27). The Hebrew word *berit* was scarcely known outside the Old Testament, although Ramses III used the root b-r-t when he referred to his own treaty with the Libyans (Allbright, 1951:34; McCarthy, 1963:105). Two such tablets were found and dated as being from Qatna in Syria, an Amorite town in the 14th Century B.C. On further inspection, close transliteration of the word "*berit*" occurs in the introductory heading on the contracts of indenture on each tablet through the utilization of the phrase TAR be-ri-ti. "Be-ri-ti" as a word, could refer to a bond and includes an oath that was found on the two tablets, which was very similar to that which could be found in vassal treaties. From these observations, Allbright (1951:34) asserts that the two tablets could very well be the first published occurrence of the Hebrew word "*Berit*".

International covenants were already noted in old Sumerian texts of the third millennium B.C., and it seems likely that covenants that were upheld by oath could go back many centuries, if not perhaps millennia (Mendenhall, 1955b :26). Different scholars (McCarthy, 1963:15; Mitchell, 1969:26-29) have found treaty material from the 3rd millennium and a bit from the 1st part of the 2nd millennium, showing the prevalence of covenants during the period of the Old Testament patriarchs (2100-1800 B.C.).

The covenantal concept was therefore already familiar to Abram and his contemporaries, and probably to generations before Abram, if several earlier documents that pertain to treaties are studied (Mitchell, 1969:25-27).

The following examples antedate Abram and were found in the cultural environment from which Abram as patriarch came and where he spent his life:

- As early as 2500 B.C., Eannatum of Lagash (a city that was known to the people of Ur) imposed a treaty on the defeated neighboring city called Umma; as recorded on a damaged artifact that was found, referred to as the "Vulture Stele." (McCarthy, 1963:15-17; Mitchell, 1969:27).
- Approximately 2300 B.C., Naram-Sin of Aggade (a probable worshiper of the moon-god Sin, chief deity of Haran) established his lordship over the Elamites. He imposed a treaty on the Elamites and emphasized the value of maintaining covenant friendship with him, promising them that his friends will be their friends (Mitchell, 1969:28; Rogers, 1970:241-256).
- Between the periods of 2000 and 1500 B.C., just after Abraham's life, numerous references to covenantal arrangements can be found in the Mari archives (McCarthy, 1963: 18; Vischer, 1987: 73-87).

Furthermore, certain technical Acadian expressions that were found as forming part of the Hittite treaty texts are reminiscent of Mesopotamian legal procedures. These expressions indicate that the origins of treaty making could be sought in Mesopotamia and could antedate the Hittites (McCarthy, 1963:19). Such an understanding is important for gaining a firm grasp of both the history as well as the formulary of the treaty, since the cultural context in which the treaties originated contribute to our understanding of the treaties.

Evidence therefore shows that the practice of treaty making in a form similar to later forms dates back to the period in Mesopotamian history much earlier than the coming of the Hittites in ancient Oriental civilization. It was a practice that continued up to the time of the Hittites. It is against this historical backdrop that the covenantal concept in the ancient Near East was no foreign concept to Abram and it was within this context that Abram could relate to God's covenant with him (Nicholson, 1986:56-82). It was also within this historical setting that God chose to initiate covenant with the people whom He chose, His chosen people, Israel (Wellhausen, 1891:15-17).

Even when retracing our steps back to the fall of man (Gen.3), God already promises redemption to man (De Klerk, 1949:1-4; Feenstra, 1972:115) as two realities are emphasized, namely the sin of man as the created being and the grace of God as Creator. Even after the great deluge, God's word to the new epoch is again a word of

grace and blessing. He does not withdraw from mankind after bringing judgment on mankind's sin. Instead, He once again makes a covenant with Noah (Gen.9), promising His constant care and protection, whilst requiring allegiance from His people (Flanders, Crapps and Smith, 1973:90). This recurrent intervention from God in Scripture is referred to as the history of redemption or as the salvation-history (Weaver, 1965:148,149; McComiskey, 1985:9) It studies God's actions within the context of the historical events of God calling Abraham and fulfilling His promises to Abraham during the following centuries, and eventually calling Moses to deliver Israel from Egyptian domination, promising and leading the Israelites into the Promised Land (Robertson, 1982:175).

True as it undoubtedly is that covenant with Israel existed because of God's initiative (Vischer, 1987:75, 76), the significance and substantiality of the covenant rests on God's fidelity to His covenant with Israel, with whom He sovereignly chose to have a relationship in the Old Testament (Lemche, 1995:30). Von Rad (1974:16, 17) writes about the partnership between God and Israel, with whom God chose to converse, whilst Israel yielded to God, rose up against Him, returned to Him and entered into different forms of conversation with Him – even in the darkest hours of the nation.

2.5 The Relationship between Hittite Treaties and Biblical Covenant

From the previous discussion it follows that the meaning of the word “covenant” needs to be understood against the historical backdrop of numerous treaties and law codes that were found in ancient times. To a certain extent, the form of the Hittite vassal treaties resembled that of the biblical covenantal form. The general form of the Hittite treaties mainly consisted of six elements (Baltzer, 1971:10; Hillers, 1969:29, 30; McCarthy, 1973:12; Van Gemeren, 1997:747):

- Tutelary or preamble – introducing the parties involved (Preamble mentioning names of covenant partners).
- Historical prologue – rehearsing their past relations (Preliminary history of relationship of covenant partners).
- Stipulations – basic declaration of future relationship of partners.
- Document clause – requiring the preservation of the document in a temple and its public reading (Details of new relationship).

- A list of the divine witnesses to the treaty – i.e. witnesses to the treaty (Invocation of respective gods worshipped by both sides to act as witnesses).
- Blessings and curses – invoked for keeping or violating the treaty (Pronouncements of blessings and curses).

Where the covenantal form resembles that of a treaty, there is a bilateral character (Mendenhall, 1955a :714-723). The religio-historical background that the covenant formulary has taken from the Hittite suzerainty treaties is important to discern (McCarthy, 1963:15-48).

From the discussion of the similarities between the structure within a covenant versus the structure of ancient Near Eastern treaties, like those of the Hittite sovereigns and vassals, the following six basic elements are seen, namely (Baltzer, 1971:10; Mc Carthy, 1973:12):

- Preamble introducing the sovereign.
- Antecedent history, which is a historical prologue describing previous relations between the contracting parties.
- Statement of substance concerning the future relationship, outlining the nature of the community formed by the covenant.
- Specific stipulations, namely a document clause providing for preservation and regular re-reading of the treaty.
- The list of gods who witnessed the treaty and invocations of these gods as witnesses.
- The curses and blessings formula, curses depending upon infidelity and blessings upon fidelity to the covenant.

The above-mentioned form was utilized by Hittite princes and was found with minor variations in all the treaties. Firstly, the preamble comprised of the name and title of the ruler or king issuing the document, followed by the name and title of his father, and possibly also that of distant ancestors. For instance: "Thus speaks A, the great king, king of the land of Hatti ..., the favorite of the god ..., son of B, the great king ..., the hero." (Baltzer, 1971:11).

When this first element is approached from the position of the covenant, the preamble is suggestive of the way in which Yahweh introduces Himself, e.g. Exo.20:2. As in the covenant formula, this is followed by a survey of past events (Brown, 1975:367). The second element can be connected with Yahweh's historical involvement with Israel, the covenant history and salvation history. The third element reflects God's proclamation of salvation, divine faithfulness and peace (Isa.54:10; 55:3).

The antecedent history comprises the description of the previous relationships between the ruler or king and the vassal. It is considered as a form of historiography; and is oriented by the treaty relationship to the king, which is evaluated positively or negatively. Concerning the third element around the substance of a future relationship, this section is closely connected with the second element of antecedent history due to its recounted facts constituting the basis for the treaty relationship. The statement of relationship substance itself comprises general imperatives with the basic requirement of loyalty on the part of the treaty signatory (Baltzer, 1971:13).

The fourth element is usually found in the form of conditional statements from the schema of "if the following takes place, you shall conduct yourself as follows..." or "with these stipulations, the treaty signatory loses his rights to form or continue relations with foreign powers and/or lose diplomatic rights and/or even restrictions of trade."

With Israel as covenant partner to Yahweh's covenant, Yahweh absolutely prohibited Israel from having any part whatsoever with any other gods or nations (Exo.20:3) and also put forth specific stipulations for Israel to follow. The fifth element calls for the invocation of the gods as witnesses. This was done through a detailed list of gods, which followed the invocation formula. Lastly, these gods would not only be called as witnesses, they would also be guarantors that the treaty stipulations are adhered to as "lords of the oaths" and to "pursue relentlessly" all who break their oath whilst rewarding all adherence to the treaty terms. The counterpart of this element in the Word of God is seen in Deut. 28, where God swears by Himself.

Kulling (1964:242-249) proposes that God's covenant with Abraham (Gen.17) indicates a covenantal structure that corresponds with the structure of the Hittite treaties based on his investigation of the Hittite treaties compared to God's covenant with Israel. Yet, upon

closer investigation, it is seen that God's covenantal structure with Abraham more closely resembles that of a "royal grant" (Weinfeld, 1970:184-203). Weinfeld reasons that God's blessings for Abraham feature more prominently than God's rights, and he consequently argues that a primary difference between vassal treaties versus a royal grant does exist. Furthermore, that which God promises to perform far outweighs that which is required from Abraham in return, e.g. leaving his country, the cut animals and circumcision (Gen.12, 15, 17). No curses are pronounced against Abraham and none against God, which brings further distance with the royal grant from the structure of a Hittite treaty, for within the Hittite vassal treaty structure, the pronounced curses were seen as of extreme importance, as they represented the power which would ensure loyalty to the treaty. It is only when Yahweh brings Israel into the Mosaic covenant under the requirements of the Sinaitic Law (Exo.19-24) that He holds forth life or death (Deut. 28) as the direct result of obeying or disobeying His Laws.

2.6 An overview of Old and New Testament covenants

Mendenhall (1954:50, 51) is of the opinion that the covenantal idea is at the foundation and the origin of the nation of Israel. However, it must be kept in mind that no original covenant texts per se can be found in the Old Testament. Narratives concerning covenantal activities between God and Israel do occur, but no specific covenantal texts are cited in Scripture (Van Rooy, 1977:213). From here, an investigation into Biblical covenants will follow and will commence with an overview of the various covenants in the Old Testament, starting with the Covenant of Creation.

2.6.1 The Covenant of Creation

The opinion exists that before Creation the Godhead decided to establish a covenant with man so that man could eventually be redeemed (Feenstra, 1972: 125, 126, Robertson, 1982:4). This covenant would be referred to as the *covenant of grace*, which can be viewed from the theological construct that has been named the *promise covenant* (Mc Comiskey, 1985: 139). Within this framework that was founded by God before the creation of all things, God is seen as already having placed man in a covenantal relationship with Himself by the very act of creating man in His own likeness and image. The sovereignly established life and death bond, i.e. a covenantal relationship, was established, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, through the fact of creation itself and referred to as the Covenant of Creation (Dumbrell, 1984:32; Van Gemeren, 1997:748,

749). It was also through the mutual creating and speaking-relationship that God and man had, that they could commune with each other (Feenstra, 1972:127; Robertson, 1982:67).

2.6.2 The Adamic Covenant

This covenant is also referred to as the Covenant of Commencement (Robertson, 1982:93). A provision of the Adamic administration regarding the covenant of redemption is recorded in Gen. 3:14-19. God addresses those who have transgressed against Him in order of their defection from loyalty to Him, first speaking to satan (Gen.3:14 and 15), then to the woman (Gen.3:16) and then to the man (Gen. 3:17-19). Elements of curse and blessing are found in each address so as to bind together in an inseparable manner the Covenant of Creation with the covenant of redemption.

The *covenant of work* (Gen.3:17-19) was given to Adam by God, as a way to be followed so as to obtain everlasting life, although it is important to note that Adam could not obtain everlasting life through working, but rather through the covenant of work as the way itself. The covenant is mono-pluric, in that it is a sole initiative from God and man has no part to play in its origin. Man is, however, asked to either accept or reject God's invitation by choosing his response, which results in the expression of the covenant, making it di-pluric (Feenstra, 1972:127; Waltke, 2001: 83).

2.6.3 The Noahic Covenant

The first mention of two lines of development among humanity appears in God's covenant with Adam (Gen.6:5), namely one belonging to the seed of the woman and one line to the seed of satan (Robertson, 1982:109-110). It is within this context of evil multiplying among man that God wishes to bring judgment on all mankind and all living creatures through the cataclysmic course of action that the great deluge represented (Dumbrell, 1984:11). Even though corruption had continuously seized the whole mind and purpose of mankind (Flanders et al., 1973:83, 84), righteous Noah and his household found favor in God's sight (Gen.6:8,9). Noah's righteousness lead God to preserve him and his household. As a result of the pleasing aroma on Noah's altar (Gen.8:20, 21), God also renews His covenant with Noah as the surviving representative of mankind (Robertson, 1982:110). Thus, the covenant God made with Noah can also be referred to as the *covenant of preservation*, seeing that that which God instructed in

Gen.1:28 correspond to what God repeats in Gen.9:1, Gen.1:29 correspond with Gen.9:29; Gen.1:20-25 is repeated in Gen.9:10 (Van Gemeren, 1997:748)

2.6.4 The Abrahamic Covenant

The background to the Abrahamic covenant can be found in the covenant with Noah, where the word "covenant" is found in Scripture for the first time. God re-establishes His relationship with man through the covenant He made with Noah after the great deluge (Gen.8:20-9:17; Gen. 10; Gen.11:10-32) (Van Gemeren, 1997:748). Mankind was given a new beginning, creation was restored and the original command to mankind was re-instated (Gen.8:22-9:3) (Flanders et al., 1973:89-93).

The emphasis within the Abrahamic covenant falls on the promise of Yahweh to Abram (Gen.12:1-3), leading to the identification of this covenant as essentially promissory and as fundamental to all biblical covenants, whilst other covenants are seen as being "administrations" of it (McComiskey, 1985:193). Also referred to as the *covenant of promise* (Robertson, 1982:127), the concept of God's covenant with Abraham brings the biblical doctrine of redemption into prominence (Dumbrell, 1984:47). Abraham, to whom God gave His redemptive covenant, is linked with the redemption perfected in Jesus Christ in the New Testament (McComiskey, 1985:175).

God's program of redemption is continually underlain and directed by a covenantal structure (McComiskey, 1985:10). One of the most foundational aspects of the Old Testament is the promise given to Abraham and his descendants (Gen.12:2 and 3; Gen.7; Gen.17:1-8). This promise is an eternal patriarchal promise (Gen.13:15; 17:7, 8, 13, 19; Gen. 48:4), for its blessings would be administered to all the people of faith, the children of Abraham, throughout the ages (Lion-Cachet, 1977:126, 127; McComiskey, 1985:17).

The initial call and promise made to Abram (Gen.12:1-3), together with the actual covenant cutting ritual (Gen.15:1-21); followed by the covenant of circumcision (Gen.17:1-27), all indicate a progressive journey between Yahweh and Abraham (Weaver, 1965:153). Yahweh chose to call Abram to leave his known country and father's house and to go to the land that Yahweh would show him. Obedience would lead to a fulfillment of a threefold promise, namely Abraham's seed would become a

great nation and the land of Canaan would be given to them as the Promised Land. Thirdly, Abraham's fidelity to God's required journey from Haran to Canaan would lead to all mankind being blessed through Abraham (Flanders et al. 1973:102,103).

Following the call and promise described in Gen.12, Yahweh cuts covenant with Abram twice (Gen. 15:18 and 17:2). Both instances are related to the promise in Gen.12, involving posterity, land, continuing relationship with Yahweh and being a blessing to the nations (VanGemeren, 1997:749). In Gen.15, the promise is renewed and strengthened with the covenant ritual in Gen.15:9-18, whilst the visible sign of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham is given in Gen.17 as the physical sign of circumcision of Abraham and all those who are male in Abraham's house. A ritual cutting is commanded by God (Gen.15 and 17), but each chapter's ritual cutting is different in nature and purpose. The cutting of the animals is for the purpose of covenant ratification, whilst the cutting of the foreskin is portrayed as a mark or a sign of the covenant itself without explicit association with the covenant ratification (Williamson, 2000:100-103).

2.6.5 The Mosaic Covenant

Historically, Israel was already in a covenantal relationship with the Lord through Abraham (Robertson, 1982:171). The distinctive characteristic of the Mosaic covenant is its setting of God's Laws (*Mitzvot*) regulating Israel's life in the framework of the election of Israel by grace (Exo.19:5, 6) (Van Gemeren, 1997:749). It is also at Sinai that Yahweh raises the covenantal question to Israel formally to be His own possession (Exo.19:5) (Dumbrell, 1984:81).

The Sinai or Mosaic covenant, the heart of which is unfolded in Exodus 19-24, is undergirded by God's deliverance of his people from the slavery they were under in Egypt (Exo.19:4, 20:2). This connection ultimately ties up to the covenant promise made by Yahweh to Abraham (Gen. 17; Exo.3:7-14; 6:2-5) (Van Gemeren, 1997:749), although the emphasis in the Sinai covenant falls on the responsibilities of the Israelites to fulfill the covenantal requirements (Exo.19:5; Gen.17:9). The main stipulations of the covenant were constituted in the *Decalogue* (Exo.20:2-27) with the laws of the so-called Book of the Covenant (Exo.21-23) supplementing the *Decalogue*.

The precise relationship between the Mosaic covenant and the preceding promises and the following fulfillments thereof has proven to be one of the most persistent problems of biblical interpretation (Robertson, 1982:167). The period of Israelite history governed by the Mosaic covenant was a period in which it may seem that the Abrahamic promise had receded into the background. Elements like the tablets of stone, the legal codes of the Mosaic covenant, relate to the promise in a remarkable way, but keep in mind that the promise is an essential part of the Mosaic covenant, for the Mosaic covenant followed the promise (Exo.2:24; 3:15, 16), although the promise to Abraham was not yet fulfilled by it (Exo.32:13; 33:1) (McComiskey, 1985:66, 67).

The conditionality of the people's obedience to God's covenant stipulations (Deut.29:12, 13) indicate that God's fulfillment of His promise rested on Israel's response to the externalized summation of the will of God (Robertson, 1982:172). Just as Abraham drove away the birds of prey that came to devour the covenantal parts of the ritualistically cut animals (Gen.15), the Lord solemnly warns Israel that a covenant-breaker's *"carcasses shall be food to all the birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away"* (Deut.28:26). This curse if the covenant is broken is repeatedly uttered in Scriptures like I Kings 14:11, 16:4; 21:24; II Kings 9:10; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; Ps. 79:2, 3.

It is only under the New Covenant, that there is relief from these covenantal curses (Heb.9:15-20; Luke 22:20) through Christ's blood of the covenant that has been poured out for many unto remission of sins (Matt. 26:28), which simultaneously removes the curse of the Old Covenant as well as introduces the blessed condition of the New Covenant (Robertson, 1982:145).

2.6.6 The Davidic Covenant and the prophets

Also referred to as the *Covenant of the Kingdom*, the Davidic covenant represented a consummation point in the history of redemption with the localization of God's throne in Jerusalem, the identification of the throne of David with the manifestation of the Lordship of Christ on the earth, as well as the movement toward the establishment of a Messianic Kingdom (Robertson, 1982:218, 219).

The purpose of the covenant with David (II Sam.7) was to engraft the developing monarchy into the existing Israelite covenantal structure, to which extent it could be seen as a modification of the Mosaic covenant and as presenting another step towards the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant (Dumbrell, 1984:127).

The Old Testament prophets had the awareness that the covenant was basic to Israel's earliest life and faith (Clement, 1965:19). From the deep concern that prophets like Jeremiah had with the possible threat of dissolution of the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel, Jeremiah did not achieve averting God's judgment or transforming (Jer. 1, 2) Israel's religion. Instead, Jeremiah awakened a deeper awareness of what covenant meant so that through Israel's defeat and exile, a new community could arise that was penitent of its past sins and eager to receive the promises of restoration that a restored covenant held.

It was prophets like Ezekiel who prophesied about a new baptism, a new covenant that will come (Ezek. 36:25-28). The Old Covenant was giving way to a new covenant to enter and Ezekiel prophesied about God putting a new heart into Israel (Ezek.36:25,26); whilst Isaiah of Babylon spoke of God doing "a new thing" (Isa. 40:1-4). Other Old Testament prophets like Amos did not specifically use the word "covenant" in his prophesies, although his entire approach to preaching centered around and presupposed covenant (Dumbrell, 1984:168). Hosea was clearly orientated towards covenant, using the word "covenant" and the metaphor of marriage explicitly to create a movement from Israel's adulterous breach of covenant towards a covenantal renewal (Hos. 2, 3). In Jer. 31:31-34, the prophet's statement about the inauguration of the New Covenant is found. This New Covenant rests wholly upon divine initiative and is constituted by a divine pardon, which enables a new beginning.

2.6.7 The New Covenant

The New Covenant is also referred to as the *covenant of grace* or the *covenant of consummation*. It does not nullify the covenant of work; instead it has come to fulfill it (Heb.8:7 – 13). Christ, as the second or last Adam, has gone to stand in the position where the first Adam fell with all mankind following his fall (1 Cor.15:22 & 45). In doing so, Christ fulfilled the requirements of the consequences of Adam's disobedience to God (Gen.3:15) and instituted the New Covenant of grace; through which man could now be

able to live by grace, not works. Through Christ standing in for man's fall through Adam, He also fulfilled God's covenant with Abraham that stated that God covenanted with Abraham and his seed to be their God (Gen.17:7).

As noted in Jer. 31:31-34, the New Covenant appears to have in mind a fresh dispensation from the Sinai covenant, a re-writing of the provisions of the Sinai covenant on the individual's heart, where forgiveness of sins will be so complete that sin would no longer be remembered (Dumbrell, 1984:198-200). The Greek word "*diatheke*" stands closest to the Old Testament word "Berit" and occurs in relation to the idea of the New Covenant in Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20; I Cor. 11:25 and Heb.8:7-13. These Biblical texts both predict and fulfill the old covenant through the life and death of Christ. In these texts Exodus 24:3-8 is recalled with reference to Christ's blood, whilst the epistle of Hebrews further develops a New Covenant theology to indicate how the substance of Mosaic Law finds fulfillment in Christ (Van Gemeren, 1997:752-754).

The Lord's Supper represents the formal inauguration of the New Covenant (Matt. 26:28), also referred to as the dispensation of grace. The relationship between Law and Grace is imperative for a clear understanding of the shift from the old to the new. Paul wrote a substantial amount concerning Law and Grace (Rom. 7, 8), where Law seems to be regarded as a source of misery and death, whilst the life that we have received in Christ Jesus has set us free from the Law of sin and death (Rom. 8:1, 2).

The teachings of Christ show Jesus to be an authority over the Mosaic Law, expressing Himself through statements concerning the Law in texts like Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5; Matt.23:23, 24; Luke 11:42-44 and Matt. 5:17-48. Most importantly, however, He had come to fulfill the Law once and for all (Matt. 5:17). Christ called His followers to live, not under the oppressive legal structure of Pharisaic practice, but rather through the joyful expression of love for one's fellow man, as characterized by His Sermon on the Mount (Matt.5:17-48). Righteousness could now be attained through following Christ's example through the aid of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:3, 4; II Cor.3:4- 6). God the Father's new act in Christ renders the law-based system obsolete, for grace has invaded the world on the cross and a new principle of salvation has arrived. To continue to rely on the law as the way to salvation is to fail to recognize that "the rules have changed," for with the coming of Christ, salvation and a relationship with the Father is

made possible through grace, because of an acceptance of the New Covenant instead of the previous covenants that offered a strained relationship with God through works and the Law.

2.7 Summary

This chapter started with an exploration into how man was formed in the image of God (Gen. 1:26, 27). The concept of *Imago Dei*, i.e. man's formation in the image of God, was linked to man. Therefore, man is accountable to God because of the very fact that God is man's Creator and life-giver, and man is indebted to God for that very same reason. This act of Creation by God is referred to as the Covenant of Creation. After Adam's formation into the image of God, Adam as well as Eve's relationship with God was intact. They had unbroken fellowship with God being not only the Creator of Adam, but also his father, the one from whom he came, until they were successfully tempted and fell from their intimate relationship with God. Following the fall of man God repetitively reached out to him through various Old Testament covenants in order to give man an opportunity to come back into a type of relationship with God.

This chapter, then, investigated the history of covenant and researched the background to the formation of the Biblical covenants. In addition, it formulated definitions of the concept of covenant, as well as offered a comparison between the general forms of the Hittite vassal treaties and God's covenantal form. The overview of the Old Testament covenants leading up to the New Testament covenant showed God to not only be man's Creator, but also showed God as the Father of all that He created (1 Cor.8:6a), as the Father Who sent the Son in the New Covenant (John 5:37). The main objective of the chapter is to propose that God as Father of all that has been created (1 Cor.8:6a), is also a God who continuously gives His children a way to restore their relationships with Him.

2.8 Preliminary Conclusion

Thus far, it is concluded that God is not only a Creator, but also a Father of all that has been created. He is a gracious God who continuously reaches out to mankind to offer restoration of man's relationship with God. He is a Father who longs to embrace those who have fallen away and His invitation for inclusion into the New Covenant is the widest

spread invitation to the nations of all the previous covenants that were known to be more Israel-based.

In the following chapter, the metaphor of Father that God uses in Scripture to help man relate to God will be investigated, and a discussion of significant attributes that can be identified about God as Father will follow. The Jewish perspective on fathering, as well as what contemporary Christian literature says about fathering, will also be included.

CHAPTER 3
ATTRIBUTES OF GOD AS FATHER IN SCRIPTURE, AND FATHERING IN THE
PATRIARCHAL TRADITION AS COMPARED TO CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

3.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 needs to still be seen as part of the basis theory, for the reason that, similar to the investigation in Chapter 2, into the theological perspective on Biblical Covenant, Chapter 3 will delve into the theological perspectives of the God of these Covenants that present Himself to His children as a Father. In this sense then, chapter 3 also represents a further expounding of the above stated theological perspectives derived primarily from Scripture, in this study, an expounding on the Fatherhood of God (cf Campbell-Lane, 2003:12). Chapter 2 investigated the Biblical covenants in both the Old as well as the New Testaments that offers man access to a relationship with God. Even though the Old Testament alludes to the suggestion of God as Israel's Father, it is in the New Testament that Jesus openly reveals and points towards God as not only His, but also our Father. This chapter commences with a discussion into the Biblical metaphor that God uses to portray and reveal Himself to us as our Father (Goede, 2007; Van der Watt, 1999, 2000). Following this discussion, various significant attributes that God reveals about Himself as our Father in Scripture will be identified and discussed. As discussed in the previous chapter, God's Fatherhood, as portrayed by the Biblical Covenants, will be integrated with the attributes that human fathers identify as important attributes for fathering. In the chapters to follow, these attributes of God will be put forward as representing the foundation for human fathering (Eph. 3: 14, 15,). God (*Adonai*) repeatedly presents Himself as a covenant-orientated God (Gen. 15, 17; Jer. 31:31-33, Heb. 8) who always remains faithful (1 Thess.5:24,), is longsuffering (Ps. 86:15) and is a God who always brings hope (Ps. 71:5).

Following the above exploration, a look at the ancient patriarchal traditions regarding fatherhood will reveal how fathers were traditionally seen in ancient Mediterranean Jewish daily life (Miller, 1989:51). The chapter will conclude with a look into the message that contemporary Christianity conveys to fathers today. It will discuss some of the most significant attributes that contemporary Christianity proposes to fathers to utilize as a foundation on which to build their fatherhood.

3.2. The Metaphor of God as Father

Botha (2004:508) writes that the metaphorical nature of the language of the Bible is indisputable, and that it, in this respect, does not differ from the nature of ordinary language or from the language used in science and theology. Scripture, Botha adds, is replete with well-known metaphors about God. God is portrayed, among other images, as Creator, Father, King, Judge, Shepherd or Redeemer. Upon consideration of the amount of metaphors in the New Testament alone, one feels obliged to acknowledge the contribution of metaphors to the transmission of the Gospel (Goede, 2007:1). Goede observes that it seems to be most frequently believed that metaphors should be seen as a literary expression that does indeed have scientific usability within the field of theological study.

Soskice (1992:54,55) proposes that a metaphor can also be defined as a figure of speech in which we speak of one thing in terms that suggest another thing, "so when we speak of God as a farmer, and say of him that he plants his seeds, nurtures the young shoots, separates the wheat and the tares, we are speaking metaphorically." Lakoff & Turner (1989:119) speak of the grounding of the metaphor that is used by virtue of correlations we make from our own experiences. Botha (2005:409) agrees that metaphors rest on some form of analogy that relates to differences or similarities within or between different domains. Metaphors can be seen not only as lingual articulations of purported interactive meanings between two different semantic domains, or between differences and similarities within one domain, but are also typical of thought processes about the world, writes Botha.

According to McFague (1987:34), human beings can only relate to God through that which is metaphoric. He argues that the use of metaphor in relating to God "is an attempt to say something about the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar, an attempt to speak about what we do not know in terms of what we do know (McFague, 1987:33)."

If this reasoning is followed, it remains that a qualitative difference still exists between that which is earthly versus that which is Godly (Van der Watt, 2000:22), for McFague reminds us that even though such a metaphoric construction has the ability to put forth an enhanced understanding of God, it cannot serve as a definition of God. She also proposes a model of Metaphor that can be utilized in service of others, as Louw

(1997:74, 75) mentions. McFague identifies four metaphors in her model, of which God as our Father, within the metaphor of family, is one. Frye (1989:51 -55) agrees that God as Father can be seen as a metaphor, for Frye reasons that a metaphor “names” or “carries a word or phrase far beyond the ordinary lexical meaning intended, in order to provide a fuller and more direct understanding of the subject. Frye furthermore sees Biblical metaphors as being “transparent to the divine reality” of God.

Rogers (2002:377) confirms that since the birth pangs of creation up to the development of the post-modern society, one of the primary modes of exchange between God and humanity has been to approach each other as Parent and child. When considering this statement, a word of caution from Spencer (1996:439) reminds us that when we think of God as Father, the image of “father” may suggest various constellations in our minds depending on our personal backgrounds or our cultures. Spencer encourages us to delve deeply into what Scripture reveals about the Father image of God, so that we might avoid walking into the traps of our own transference, i.e. seeing Him through the deductions we make about Him from our own experiences with life and our biological parents, and becoming confused with Who God as our Father really is. Consider, for instance, a young girl who watches her father drive away from his marriage and family, causing her to perhaps relate to God as a Father who will, for instance, either abandon her, or alternatively create the expectation that He will never abandon her.

Spencer (1996) warns us not to extrapolate our own particular understanding of what a “father” is without ensuring the specific meaning that a metaphor portrays. In general, one of the positive attributes for the use of metaphors within Scripture maintains that a high degree of consensus still exists as to what a metaphor points towards (Van der Watt, 2000:4-5). Metaphor, utilized throughout Scripture to sketch an imaginary vision and understanding of God and His acts, was also one of the most natural modes of expression in ancient cultures (Goede, 2007:16).

Linking the everyday conventions of life to a believer’s understanding of what happens in the spiritual realm, for instance linking generally accepted ideas on family life to our relationship with God, can be utilized as biblical metaphors through which the believer can better relate to, for instance, being “sons of God.” Van der Watt (1999: 491-492) refers to this as “associative communication.” Let us perhaps consider texts where

Scripture speaks about the “child” being loved by the “Father,” for the child (believer) loves Christ, the Son (John 16:27). Here, the social dynamic of the interrelatedness between father and child automatically becomes activated in the mind of the reader, giving the reader a social knowledge that can serve as an interpretative context.

The Gospel of John (1:12, 13), for instance, makes two remarks that relate to being born. Firstly, there are those who believe they will be born of God and; following this birth, they will receive the power to become children of God. Thus, to become a child of God, you need to be born of God, who is the source of re-birth and the Father of these children (Van der Watt, 2000:178, 179). The metaphor here reflects the believer being born again within a particular heavenly social circle (a family) with God as their Father.

Van der Watt further asserts that the relationship between God and the believer is defined metaphorically in terms of the most intimate social phenomenon in the ancient world, namely the family. The metaphor of God portraying Himself as the “Father” and the believers as His “children” (Van der Watt, 1999:494) can less directly be seen in Old Testamental texts like Deut. 1:31, where Moses reminds the Israelites: “... There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” Carrying a child was one of the commonplaces of the parental image (Dille; 2004:36). When one considers a parent who is carrying a child, the image would imply that the child was still small enough to be carried. From this vantage point, consider again the image of God as Father of Israel, who is His metaphorical son, whom He carried all the way out of Egypt.

Further images brought to the Israelites by Moses in Deut. 8:5 remind Israel of their parent-child relationship with God: “Know then in your heart that as a man (father) disciplines his son, so the Lord your God disciplines you.” This metaphor highlights God as acting within His authority as Israel’s Father to discipline His children. The above fatherly imagery again conveys yet another attribute of God as Father to Israel, although other attributes apart from disciplining also exist (Dille: 2004:36, 37). The following part of the chapter will investigate some of the general attributes of God. This discussion will lead to a more specific focus on some of the most important attributes of God as He presents Himself to us within the metaphor of the Father of the covenanted child.

3.3. The Attributes of God

An investigation into what we know about the character of God is very difficult, for God exists beyond our highest thoughts. Any discussion of the character or attributes of God may simply attribute certain human characteristics to God (Leith, 1993:50). It is therefore of such importance to remember that the attributes of God can be seen as synonymous to the characteristics of God, or simply His divine nature in relationship to the world and the created being.

The attributes or characteristics of God have been organized by different theologians in ways that differ from each other (Farnell, 1925: 163-169). One such classification would be that of Erickson (2001:89) who classifies God's attributes into *natural* versus *moral* attributes. He also speaks about both the immanence and transcendence of God. The immanence of God points to God as present and active within His creation and within the human race of those who know as well as those who do not know Him. Upon considering the transcendence of God, Erickson (2001:87) points out that God does not epitomize the highest quality of a human being, and He is not limited to our ability to understand Him, instead His holiness, knowledge and power go far beyond ours.

Spykman (1992: 225) writes about attributes of God that are communicable, i.e. properties that God can share with man, like being merciful or loving. He also writes about in-communicable attributes, or attributes that God alone possesses and that man is unable to ever possess. Leith (1993:51) mentions in-communicable attributes such as God's self-existence and His eternal attributes that human beings cannot share, like His omnipotence or omnipresence. Some of God's in-communicable attributes can be seen in His perfection, in "zijn almacht, zijn alwetendheid, zijn alomtegenwoordigheid en zijn onmetelijke eeuwigheid (Marchel, 1964:46, 47)". These attributes stand separate from God's communicable attributes such as His love and mercy, which human beings are partly able to share. God's holiness would be another of His in-communicable attributes that differentiates Him from all other created beings (Berkhof, 1990:17-20).

The above-mentioned becomes important in the search to understand the relationship of God to creation, and the reasons why it is important that we understand His nature, i.e. the attributes that belong to Him, instead of focusing exclusively on the acts that He performs, like creation or guidance. This does not refer to the role He plays, like that of

Creator or Guide, or to the attributes that are permanent qualities that belong to the entire Godhead. For instance, holiness is an intrinsic quality of the Father, the Son and the Spirit and it is permanent unchanging attribute of the whole Trinity.

Another classification of the attributes of God is seen in Feenstra (1969:37-48). When Feenstra discusses the in-communicable attributes of God he mentions God's independence, constancy, eternal being, His simplicity and His omnipresence.

Again, although the above attributes have to do with the Godhead, for our study it is important to narrow our investigations down to the attributes of God the Father. Widdicombe (2000: 519 - 537) notes that God is spoken of through the utilization of the image of a Father fifteen times in the Old Testament. He is also compared with an earthly father and Israel is called His son or firstborn. In the New Testament, numerous direct references to God as our Father can be found (John 15:1-17; Eph.3: 14, 15). Lincoln (1990: 201 - 204) writes that in Eph. 3:14, 15 the text deals with the "Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" and states that the God to whom the prayer is made is described as the Father and that one must not lose sight of this focus area in this text. Floor (2002 :132-133) adds that the text shows that the Father is not only the Father of Jesus Christ, but also the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

In the Gospels, the word "Father" is used for God about one hundred and ninety times, whilst in the Pauline epistles and the Pastorals, usage of the word "Father" occurs forty two times and elsewhere in the New Testament another thirty five times (Widdicombe, 2000:520).

The original Fatherhood lies with God as our Father (Feenstra, 1969:56; Brueggemann, 1997:1-18), from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name (Eph.3:14, 15). He is the eternal Father who created us out of His own free will (Gen. 1: 26). He is not only the Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all (Eph.4: 6), He is also the Father of all those who believe and to whom He gives His Spirit through which we cry out "Abba, Father" (Mark 14:36).

3.4. The Attributes of God as Father

Reymond (1998: 165) writes that "God's glory is the sum total of all his attributes as well as any one of His attributes." God has shown Himself in Scripture as "I AM," as *Adonai*, but the focus of our study is on Him as the Father of all He has created (1 Cor. 8:6a) and of all humanity who has accepted Him and who now bear His name as sons of God, through the New Covenant (Jer.31: 31-34; Heb.8: 8-13).

It is from within this New Covenant that we hear the words of Christ teach us how to pray to the Father (Matt. 6: 9-13). The naming of God as "Our Father who art in heaven" is a frequently utilized title for God, in both Jewish and in Christian piety. In a Sumerian wisdom text we find: "My God, you are my father who begot me" and in Old Testament writings like Jer.3:4 we see Jeremiah writing: "Have you not just called to me: My father, my friend (confidant) from my youth" (De Boer, 1974:16 -19). The following part of this chapter aims to present some of the most important attributes of God as our Father.

3.4.1. He is a Father Who Loves, Forgives and Participates

In Luke 15:11-24, the parable of the Prodigal son illustrates the extravagant love of the father who is ever waiting for his son to return home. Nolland (1989:781-785) makes the comment that in the ministry of Jesus, prodigals find the free and generous love of the Father. Ogilvie (1979: 9-11) writes that the term prodigal indicates that which is extravagant, lavish, unrestrained and copious. Ogilvie reasons that instead of us talking about the prodigal son, we need to talk about the prodigal father. Visser't Hooft (1982:123) agrees that God the Father transcends the limits of patriarchalism and that this is even more clearly expressed in the parable of the prodigal son, which should instead be called the parable of the father's love. The father's love knew no limits, his forgiveness no boundaries, his joy no restraint – what we see here is a prodigal love for the lost. It is upon this love that all rests and from which God as our Father reaches out to man.

It is from this love that God reaches out to Israel. In leading Israel out from the slavery of Egypt, God shows Himself as Israel's "redemptive father" (Isa. 63:16). He is also a God Who participates in our lives, as Miller (1989:72 -77) states, indicating that the sign of the circumcision can be seen as the mark of paternal involvement, even from the 8th day

after birth. He also suggests it to be a further sign of a covenant between father and son, whether between God and man or between human father and son.

In the following paragraph God is discussed as our Father Who covenants with us, His children. This foundational attribute of God which gives rise to the divine-human covenant relationship, is witnessed repetitively in Scriptures where Yahweh's love is extended toward the Israelites (Gen. 8:20 – 22; Gen. 15; Ex. 24; Deut.6) in the Old Testament and again in the New Testament, where we are told that we should love Him as He has loved us by sending His Son to die (John 3:16) in our place (Ackerman, 2002:445).

Repetitively, we see God as our Father reaching out to us, His children, to forgive and extend a hand of mercy and a way for us to be reconciled with Him (Fudge, 1992: 30 – 33). Kemeza (2002: 20, 21) continues to apply the Father's outstretched hand to repeat offenders in prisons, stating that Jesus speaks of repetitive forgiveness as imperative in God's sight. This too is a sign of God as our Father's constant love and wish to participate in our lives. Consider, for instance, the Hebrew word "*Hesed*" that is used often as a human or social concept and which is ascribed to the divine-human relationship. "*Hesed*" is translated as "steadfast love and faithfulness" or "abounding in love" (Ps.103:8) or as "grace," or "favor" or "kindness," as seen in passages relating to covenant and relationships (Britt, 2003:289-290; Glueck, 1967:71).

Since the nineteenth century the symbolism of the strict and punitive father started to disappear in German Protestant theology, whilst bringing God as our Father into the light as a good father, who loves and is above the firmament (Metz & Schillebeeckx, 1981:6). However, it must be kept in mind that both the terms 'father' and 'son' were already used in ancient times to describe a covenant relationship between two parties, along with the term 'love.' In such covenantal situations love was seen as the binding factor in the covenant between God and man, therefore we need to include it as one of the main attributes of God as Father (Dille, 2004:33). From the time of His covenant with Israel, we take note of how He loves those who are lost in the world, and therefore He sends His Son (John. 3:16) so that they might be saved and come into relationship with Him as their Father. God treats all alike, even to the extent that "He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matt. 5:45).

God as Father actively participates in all of our lives, whether we know Him yet or not. He wants us to participate in a relationship with Him (Fiddes, 2000:50, 51).

The universalism of God's Fatherhood should rule out all claims to a monopoly of truth by any nation or religious group (Searle, 2003:308). Searle writes that the basis of the relationship with God as Father is a deep, tender-hearted love that undergirds the discipline necessary for such an upbringing; for as a Father who loves, He is still, perhaps because He loves, a Father who disciplines those who fear Him, for Psalm 103:13 states: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him."

Ackerman (2002:437) refers to Moran's 1963-article about the love of God as described in Deuteronomy. He asserts that when we study God's love, we need to remember that in reading the Book of Deuteronomy we should differentiate between our own modern tendency to see love as a tender psychological feeling or a strong personal attachment, versus it being a decision in obedience to God. Ackerman says that God's love is something that we are commanded to walk in as it is explained in the New Testament, and this confirms that God's very being is love (1 John 4: 8).

It must also be remembered that His love is intimately related to the concepts of fear and reverence. We in return express our love through our faithfulness and obedience to God. Our decisions to be faithful to God and obey Him as God's children need to be based on our freedom to choose our responses to God's wishes (Visser't Hooft, 1982:123). In a further expansion of these thoughts, Visser't Hooft (1982: 124) indicated that the awaiting father in Christ's parable of the lost son did not bring his rebellious son to the elders of the city to be stoned to death, instead he wanted his son to come to a free decision about their relationship and in his hopeful and patient love, he was willing to wait.

3.4.2. He is a Covenanted Father

Already in 1955 Schoonenberg (1955: 25) wrote that in the Old Testament Covenants God presents Himself to Israel as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel" (Ex. 3:15; Lev. 26: 42), but in the New Covenant, He presents Himself as "... the God and *Father* of our Lord, Jesus Christ"(II Cor. 1:3; Col. 1:3). The phrase, "They will

be my people, and I will be their God,” (Jer. 24:7) as emphasized in both the Old and the New Testaments, affirms the continuity between the two Testaments as made possible through the coming of Christ, which led to God’s invitation to expand to those outside the Jewish nation (Vischer, 1987:76).

For the apostle Paul, Israel’s God is not only Father to Jesus, but also Father to those who are linked to God through their faith, having themselves been incorporated into the New Covenant, and who through faith cry out “Abba, Father” (Gal. 3:27-29; 4:6,7) (Bossman, 1987:67). Paul also added that the God and Father “who called you, will not fail you” (1 Thess. 5: 24, 25), indicating that the Father is faithful to His covenant with us. In the Old Testament He is repetitively seen as a God who covenants with the whole family and who makes provision to include all those who are travelling with Israel into His covenant sign of circumcision (Wright, 2002:11-16). Our Father is one who wishes to include rather than exclude those who walk in His ways; and in this He again demonstrates His heart as a Father that wants to save and bring home those outside the household of God.

3.4.3. He is an Accessible Father

Jesus Christ was not the first to address God as “Father,” for references to a ‘Father-God’ had previously been made in pagan religions. The concept of God as “Father” can also be seen in the Old Testament in texts like Deut. 32:6; Isa. 63:16; Jer. 31:9; Hos.11:1. The word “father” is used pertaining to three aspects of fatherhood in early Jewish literature (D’Angelo, 1992:621,622). Firstly, the word “father” is used when God designated Himself to be the refuge of the afflicted and persecuted; secondly, the word “father” is frequently accompanied by a petition for an assurance of forgiveness. Lastly, the word “father” evokes the power and providence that govern the world.

Jesus did, however, introduce the title of “father” with a wider and deeper meaning and taught His disciples to do the same (Searle, 2003:307). The use of the Aramaic word “Abba,” which was a commonly used word that expressed the intimate relationship between child and parent, especially shows how Jesus proposed we approach and position our own relationship with God as our Father. The word “Abba” lays behind every use of the word “father” that can be attributed to Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus’ use of the word “Abba” is based on the derivation of “Abba” as an intimate way of

relating to one's parent (D'Angelo, 1992:614). The accessibility of God can also be seen in the New Testament when the prayer of the believer indicates that we pray "to" the Father, "through" the Son and "in" the Spirit. This pattern suggests that when we pray to God as our Father in heaven, we find our address resembling a type of dialogue that resembles that which takes place between a child and his or her father (Fiddes, 2000:37). This prayer alignment illustrates that God has made Himself accessible to us through Christ as the direct door to access Him as our Father (John 14: 6-7). Thomas' lack of understanding, as so often, writes Beasley-Murray (1999: 252-253), provides opportunity for Jesus to clarify the revelation. When Thomas said that they did not know where He was going in verse 5, so how could they follow, Jesus immediately answered with one of the classic statements about who He is and that "no one comes to the Father except through me (*Christ*)."

This verse asserts positively the direct interconnection between the Father and Jesus (Borchert, 2002: 108 - 112).

A majority of 1400 Americans who were interviewed in a poll conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (The Christian Century, 1987:172) indicated that they think of God as being a "father," but nearly 61% said that they struggle to regard God as accessible and loving, instead perceiving Him as being a judging observer.

Searle (2003:308) writes that when one studies Eph. 3:14, 15: "I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name;" these words reflect Jesus' teaching that a Father-like God is one to whom we have immediate access. In Rom. 8:15, Scripture confirms that we are adopted children who are able to use the intimate "*Abba*" in addressing God, although Mattison (1987:191) speculates about how "*Abba*" should be interpreted by the reader.

Luke portrays Jesus as praying directly to the Father on several occasions, and although Jesus addresses one prayer to "Father, Lord of heaven and earth" (Luke 10: 21), He used the simple address "Father" several other times (Luke 10:21; 22:42; 23:34; 23:46) (Mowery, 1994:354 – 355). In the same light we see that the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the "Father" (Luke 11:2). In this prayer lay the mark of their discipleship, writes Suggit (2003: 99 – 101).

3.4.4. He is a living Father Who gives Life

Another primary attribute of God as Father is expressed in John 5:26: "Just as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son also to have life in Himself." In this piece of Scripture, Jesus receives life from the Father, who has life in Him. In the polemic of the Hebrew Bible, the epithet "living God" contrasts the Lord who creates all life with the dead idols that have been made by human hands (Lev. 26:1; I Kings 18: 20 – 40; Isa. 40:18-20; 42:8; 44:9-20).

The living God has not been made by the hands of men, instead, He is the Creator and source of life (Ex. 20:11; Neh. 9:6; Acts 4:24). Going one step further, it is not the phrase "the living God" that appears in the Gospel of John, instead it is the phrase "the living Father" that we see. Fiddes (2000:7) writes that as the Father and Creator of all, the Father has chosen to send His Son so that with Christ's coming and dying on the cross, life can be given to many.

This epithet holds within it the conviction that as the eternally existent and living God, God alone is the source of all life. Although it is God who bestows life through the Son and by His Spirit, the life-giving character of God repeats in images of human fatherhood within the human spheres of the paternal relationship. However, for our discussion, the focus lies on the attribute of the Father as being a Father who has life in Himself (Grayston, 1990:51).

3.4.5. He is a Good Father Who Directs, Corrects and Rewards

God's goodness and kindness is seen right throughout Scripture (Ps. 103:1-13; Exo.34:6), with several Biblical passages associating the Father with reward (Mowery, 2006:642-656). Miller (1989:51) writes that in both the Old and the New Testament, one God and one God alone must be worshiped and served. He writes that it is this God who is "a divine father, yet not cowardly or withdrawn like so many of his human counterparts ... vigorously involved and uniformly just, kind and compassionate." It is this Father who bestows us with "good gifts" in Matthew (7: 7 – 11). This piece of text can be seen as a self-contained unit with Luke attempting to more clearly contrast that which is given by God to man, versus what is given to man by man (Hagner, 1986, 172 - 175). In a commentary by Blomberg (1992:129 – 130), it is noted that one can see in this text that God treats people at least as well as and often even better than they treat each

other. In the light of His generosity, He is also the Father, who has given us His Son as our eternal hope (Col. 1: 27). Stone and Lester (2001:259) write about the importance of ministering hope so that a future expectation of healing and deliverance can be created and built upon the knowledge of Christ as our eternal hope. Christ also holds absolute power over all that is created, for "In His hand is the life of every creature, and the breath of all mankind (Job 12: 10). God's hand is everywhere and endowed with total power over man, for His hand is the instrument of his justice, whether to guide, correct or reward (Barbotin, 1976: 174).

According to Prov.3: 12 God, as our Father, disciplines those who are His true sons. Family conventions of ancient times, for instance, prescribed that a child born into a family had to comply with certain social expectations (Van der Watt: 2005: 284, 285). The child's parents had given him life at birth, which obligated the child to honor his parents through his obedience to the parents' wishes. Just as God as our Father has bestowed eternal life on us, His requirement of us is that we should as true sons and daughters obey His instructions, allowing us to be disciplined into His image, so that the image of God can be restored in man.

Visser't Hooft (1982: 119) writes that Jesus' words: 'Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?' (Luke 2: 49) can be seen as part of the foundation of Jesus' life and relationship with the Father. Christ's focus on being in His Father's house points to His dedicated relationship with God His Father, who directed and guided His life. Barne's Commentary (Electronic Bible program, e-sword) say that some think that "My Father's house" is actually indicating Jesus needing to be in the physical temple. In this sense then, Jesus would purely be reminding His parents that He came from heaven and had a higher Father than an earthly parent; and that early in life, it was proper that he should be engaged in the work for which he came. In Clarke's commentary, "My Father's house" translates into "My Father's concerns" as if He was saying "where should a child be found, but in His Father's house?" The above translation is defended by Grotius and by Pearce and was later found in the Syrian, later Persian, and Armenian versions (Clarke's Commentary, e-sword). Again, "in my Father's house" could also literally refer to, literally speaking: "in the affairs/things of my Father" although Stein (1992:123) does agree that it could also mean the literal house or temple of God.

Visser't Hooft (1982: 119) writes that Christ did not have a philosophical conviction regarding the fatherhood of God; instead He had a "constant awareness of the presence of a loving father who had entrusted His Son with a message and a mission to humankind."

3.5. Fatherhood in the Ancient Patriarchal tradition

In ancient Mediterranean life the family was generally regarded as the basis of the social structure (Stambaugh & Balch, cited in van der Watt, 2002: 494). Birth into a family meant "becoming part of that family" with everything that it involved. Where the specific family was positioned on a social level was of particular significance in those times. Assessing a person's social standing according to which family he came from was therefore seen as an important way to determine a person's identity and honor or own individual position in society. The fathers in these families were seen as the authoritative heads of their families (Van der Watt, 2002: 495) and both birth and acceptance into the family automatically meant that the child stood in a specific, well-defined relationship to the father of the family.

Israel's kinship structure can be seen as having three tiers (Wright, 2002: 13). The first tier depicted the child's specific father's house (*bet- 'ab*). This tier was followed by the second tier which was the clan (*mispahah*) that the father's house belonged to. The third tier was the tribe (*sebet/matteh*) in which the clan fitted. For our purposes, we will look at the father's house (*bet- 'ab*), which was also the smallest unit, albeit still consisting of a fairly large group of people living within the household of a single living male ancestor (known as the head of a father's house).

Owing more than obedience to his parents for giving him life, a child born into a family in the ancient Mediterranean world was obliged to fulfill certain social expectations, such as submitting to certain ethical conduct, and they were taught what is expected of them as well as how they are expected to act. The principle was that receiving something from somebody obliged the receiver to respond accordingly and fittingly towards the giver, which referred to the child, having received the gifts of life and care from his parents. Specifically, the children needed to return these gestures by being responsive and obedient, thereby honoring their parents. The child's response to his parents was not seen as voluntary; it was a social and in many cases, even a religious obligation to repay

his parents for the benefits that he experienced from their hands (Van der Watt, 2000:284). If a child ignored his social and ethical obligation to act according to the will of his father, he was seen as acting against his social nature and as not being loyal and not remembering his own identity.

Within this highly structured role-relationship that existed between fathers and sons in the ancient Mediterranean culture, the status of "father" carried with it a patriarchal figure imbued with honor and rank, who is functionally equipped to manifest either mercy or repudiating judgment (Bossman, 1987:74, 75).

Miller (1989:69 - 70) writes that through the rituals of redemption, God as redemptive and caring father chose to present Himself to human fathers as a Father who wants to be involved in actively fathering His children. Just so, Israelite fathers were known to be involved in the care and teaching of their own children to a degree that was unique in the world of their time. What Miller suggests is that under the influence of their experience of God as a caring, redemptive father (Isa. 63:16), and especially since the days of Moses and Israel's exodus out of Egypt (Deut. 32:6), certain ways of fathering were introduced that over centuries served to consolidate and strengthen the role of men as fathers in their families to a degree that was unknown in the ancient world. For instance, the Bar Mitzvah that the Jewish fathers held for their sons, publically affirmed and initiated him into manhood (Paterson, 1975: 56-67; Rabbi Donin, 1977: 77-98)

Another important aspect of fatherhood in ancient Mediterranean culture focused on a responsible father being someone who provided for his family. In this sense then, since fathers were seen as providers, their love was measured by their giving. When Jacob gave his young son, Joseph, a special coat (Gen. 37:3), explains Buchanan, both Joseph and his brothers understood that the coat was a sign of significant love and affection.

3.6. Attributes of a father within contemporary Christian literature

Three main characteristics of fathering within the Mediterranean culture become clear from the discussion on ancient Jewish fathering, namely:

- The Jewish father was the undisputed head of the household and held an unchallenged authority and expected obedience to his instruction (Prov. 1: 8).
- His special responsibility was to provide a religious and moral education based on knowledge of the Mosaic Commandments and Jewish Law (Deut. 6: 7).
- The basis of the father-child relationship was a deep, tender-hearted love that undergirded the discipline necessary for such an upbringing, as seen in Psalm 103:13, where the psalmist writes: "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him."

Whilst both those from the Jewish religion and Christians may not be able to agree on who the Messiah, the Son of God is, the person of God the Father seems to be the one part of the Trinity on which Jewish and Christian understanding are able to unite (Goshen-Gottstein, 2001:471). Searle (2003: 308) writes that if God indeed holds the pattern for true fatherhood in His hands, we are in definite need to acquire certain guidelines for good parenting from Him. Note, for instance, Scripture references where Jesus refers to God as "*our Father*" through utilizing comparisons with a good Jewish father (Luke 15: 11 - 32).

So far, this chapter has delved into the Biblically revealed attributes of God as our Father, which was followed by an investigation into how fatherhood played itself out in the ancient patriarchal traditions. Let us now investigate what modern-day Christian literature puts forth concerning human fathering.

3.7. Contemporary Christian Perspectives

Derek Prince (2000: 50) writes: "The fact behind all other facts is that God created the universe as a Father". It is in this light that the apostle Paul writes "...I kneel before the Father, from whom **his whole family** in heaven and on earth derives its name." (Eph. 3: 14 & 15)

Prince (2000:50) explains that the word for family in the Greek text is the word "*Patria*." The word "*Patria*" is derived from the word "*pater*," the Greek word for "father." If this word is utilized in the text it would look like this: "... I kneel before the Father, from whom **all fatherhood** in heaven and on earth derives its name." All fatherhood began with God, Prince writes, and ultimately goes back to the Fatherhood of God. In 1 John 4: 16

we see God portrayed as love, for Scripture states that “God is Love.” If we combine this truth about God with the truth about God’s fatherhood, we arrive at the conclusion that God as a Father created the universe in love (Prince, 2000:51-56) and that He loves us from this same loving heart of a Father. He wants us to feel safe in this love.

God sent His Son to die in our place out of love (John 3: 16), and it is this same Father that we see in the parable in Luke (15:11 – 32) who waits for the child who has lost his way, to return home (McClung, 2003: 37 – 39). McClung further expands that an important attribute of fatherhood is the ability to continue to love a child at the cost of oneself, whilst waiting for that child to return from straying. There is a significant amount of selflessness in the above-mentioned way of fathering. Consider for a moment the sacrifice that the Father chose to make in sending Christ for our sakes, writes Mac Donald (1986: 41 - 45). At a human level, Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus Christ, had to follow suit in making pivotal sacrifices since he became aware of Mary’s pregnancy with Christ, was told what to name his son, and had to flee his homeland, to name just a few (Mac Donald, 1986:42 -43).

Fatherhood itself is a continuously challenging experience, and it is in this light that Mac Donald proposes it to be important that a father have ears that are turned heavenward to hear and follow the Father’s leading instructions for himself in challenging situations. Mitchell confirms in her book *Surviving the Prodigal Years* (1995:141-148) that not only do fathers need the Father’s guidance for their growing children, but the human father also needs to turn his ears towards the voice of the Father of all fathers in order to become able to continue to love and not reject the consistently wayward child.

Another important attribute of fathering a child can be seen in the involvement of the father in teaching a child as he grows up (Mc Clung, 2003:38, 39). A child is carefully taught and given daily instruction by his father whilst growing up, and in turn the father expects obedience to his voice and wishes. The aim of fathering is the eventual establishment of a heart that willingly chooses the way of the father’s instruction, instead of an outward conformity and forced obedience without a true heart relationship.

McDowell (1998: 15, 16) writes that children look for a model in their fathers, someone after whom they can mould themselves. Seeing that all families and fatherhood come

from God the Father, all fathers need to model themselves on the Father's image (Hanekom, 2002: 31-35), which becomes visible in Christ (John 14: 7).

Studies on emotionally or *physically* absent fathers confirm that this has a significantly negative effect on the child's self-esteem, his motivation to achieve, ability to wait for a reward and his ability to stand against negative group influence, which can lead to delinquency (Nicholi, in McDowell, 1998: 5, 6). Children are designed to watch and learn about that which takes place when a father speaks, for this will again affect their own choices in life as well as how they will understand how to respond to their inherited cultural definitions of manliness, masculinity, and male psychological, emotional, sexual and spiritual behavior (Culbertson, 1992: 2).

The area of direction and discipline is another pivotal area of fatherly responsibility, for in Eph. 6:4 parents are instructed to bring up their children "in the *training* and *instruction* of the Lord." Mol (1997:78, 79) explains that "training" in Greek is "*paideia*", which is translated elsewhere in Scripture as "discipline", which implies punishment. The original Greek word for "instruction" is "*nouthesia*" literally meaning "teaching by word of mouth." Both these instructions require the father's active involvement in shaping his child.

A father is the leader of his family; he is the one who carries the vision for his family. When it comes to predictions about their future, children are literalists – particularly when they hear predictions from their parents who are the most important people in their lives from an earthly perspective. Communicating a special future to a child, writes Smalley & Trent (1986:89), is so important, for when a father projects hope and positive expectations into a child's future, it greatly affects the child's sense of self.

The truly effective father, writes Minirth, Newman & Warren (1992: 42 - 46) is the father who shows continuous and consistent interest in the child and is actively involved in the child's life so as to form a relationship with the child through which he can teach the child about himself, others and the world. In being present, he protects the child from harm, whilst actively instructing him. The father is seen as the primary protector, not only from external harm, but also from internal hazards, write Minirth *et al.* (1992:45), in that: "Dads protect their kids from the dangers of the inside world, from the angry, destructive impulses that originate within."

Payne (1985:11) echoes that great numbers of men are to some degree or another insecure about their masculinity, carrying with them a repressed or unaffirmed masculinity. Payne writes that very few men have indeed been adequately affirmed by their fathers as men today, and many children have grown up as pathologically split off from their masculine side altogether, because of absent or non-affirming fathers. Even so, whether a child's father affirmed him, neglected him or abused him, Dalbey (1988:145) reminds us that every earthly father is still an imperfect human being who can never meet the profound need we all have for fatherly love. The question Dalbey therefore poses concerning fathers is not *whether* they will hurt their children, but rather whether they will be willing to recognize it *when* they do and whether they will reach out to our heavenly Father to hear and listen to His instruction and encouragement. Later on in our study we will see how the above attributes of human fathers, as well as attributes that have been identified pertaining to God as our Father, will be integrated to propose a pastoral foundation that is useful for human fathering.

3.8. Summary

This chapter started with an investigation into the metaphor of God as our Father. From there a short inquiry into the communicable and in-communicable attributes of God followed, leading to a closer look at what is proposed by this study to be the more important attributes of God as our Father. These attributes have to do with His love, which brought His forgiveness and participation in all of creation and into the lives of His children. This made possible through Him also being the Father Who reaches out to those that He created in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26) and gives them access to Him through His Covenants. He is the living Father who is the giver of life and who is intimately involved in directing, disciplining and rewarding His children. After this enquiry, we investigated how ancient patriarchal traditions played themselves out in the then Mediterranean lifestyles. From here, we concluded the chapter with a brief look into what current Christian literature has published around the topic of fatherhood.

3.9. Preliminary Conclusion

This chapter showed that God is also our Father. He is the Father of all that have been created and He sets the pattern after which human fathers need to fashion themselves into His image. He gave us access to Him as His children through the Old Testament

Covenants that hinted at Him as Israel's Father; and which eventually lead Him repetitively exhibit Himself in the New Testament as "our Father who is in heaven" after whom we should take (John 14:7) and after whom all families take their names (Eph. 3: 14, 15).

In the chapters to come a meta-theoretical investigation into psychology and sociology will follow, flowing from the discussion of the Fatherhood of God as presented to us Biblically, and human fatherhood from an ancient patriarchal and contemporary Christian approach.

CHAPTER 4

META-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FATHERING

4.1 Introduction

Within chapter 4 the meta-theoretical perspectives on Fatherhood will be investigated, through a look into what different fields of study offer about the topic. In the arena of Practical Theology it is not only important to recognize what the basis theory involved with the theological study is, but it is also important to know what related disciplines (De Wet, 2006:64) offer about the specific topic of study. This investigation into what other disciplines say about a topic is referred to as the meta-theory.

This chapter aims to broaden the investigation into the domain of human fathering by researching what the fields of sociology and psychology have published in this regard. It follows on the discussion in chapter 3 about what Scripture reveals concerning the attributes of God within the metaphor of Father. From there, research regarding the ancient Jewish traditions about fatherhood, will precede an investigation into some of the important attributes of a father as put forth by contemporary Christian literature. In addition to looking at fathering in general, this chapter will also look at what current research says about the effects of alcoholic fathers, abuse or neglect by fathers, as well as the effects of divorce, which in most cases brings the physical removal of the father, on the child who will only see his or her father intermittently (Frost & Pakiz, 1990; Lohr, Mendell & Riemer, 1989:1; Bisnaire, Firestone & Raynard, 1990:1). The reason for this selection is that the above experiences typify those that are most often found in literature in this specific domain.

The chapter commences with a look from within the field of sociology into what the position of the father has been since the traditional model progressively gave way to the early modern, then to the late modern; and finally to the post-modern sociological view of a man's position within his family (Parke, 1996:24; Coltrane & Collins, 2001:437).

This will be followed with an investigation into what the field of psychology has published including amongst other aspects, the relationship between fathers and toddlers, and other relevant findings, as well as significant attributes of fathers (McBride & Darragh,

1995:490-497; Kaplan, 1998:132, Zulu, 2002: 26 -28). This chapter will conclude with a look into what research has found the variety of effects to be when a father is present and functional versus what the effects on a child would be when a father of a child is dysfunctional or absent.

4.2 Sociological Perspective

Sociology can be defined as the study of human behavior within the family's domain, but also within the social and societal domain (Giddens, 1997:2, 3). When focusing on fathering, it is important to take cognizance that fathering does not just take place between a child and his or her father, but that it is possible for the fathering relationship to also exist within the wider context of the family. Within the family context, some of the essential roles of a father have to do with him not only providing a protective shield around his family, but also encouraging his child's socialization and safe experimentation (Pierce *et al.*, 1996:43-45). In the western world, it is widely understood that a man becomes a father when he impregnates a woman, which then makes a biological event the sole criterion for becoming a father (Richter & Morrell, 2006:13). What then can be said in cases involving artificial insemination that creates human life without direct impregnation? Being a father has more to do with relationship ties than with medically established paternity. When considering polygamist situations, the identity of the father is often decided by who is married to the mother or agrees to be "the father" of the child of the mother (Richter & Morrell, 2006:13).

Fatherhood, in the African context, is also generally associated with manhood, for when one is "a man" it is expected that the man be able to take on the role of father (Richter & Morrell, 2006:15). Those who achieved the status of fathers were invariably married and were seen as the heads of their families, and in some situations, as heads of their extended families as well. Historically and traditionally fathers have fulfilled various roles, of which breadwinner and protector of women and children were at the forefront. These men were distant and detached from family affairs (Tanfer & Mott, 1997: 16 -17). Since the modern shift towards a greater level of involvement from fathers with their children, an increasing amount of literature can be seen that verifies the importance of a father or father figure in a child's life (Richter & Morrell, 2006:155).

Fatherhood in South Africa plays out in a country that can be described as an upper-middle income country, but also as a country of stark contrasts. The extreme inequality that is evident in South Africa causes one to see destitution, hunger and overcrowding side-by-side with affluence (Woolard, 2002:1)

HIV/Aids also plays a major role in South African families. Woolard (2002:1) found the following about HIV/Aids in South Africa:

- Life expectancy has fallen from 62 years in 1990 to 48 in 1999 as a consequence of HIV/Aids.
- It is estimated that 13% of the population and 25% of adults in South Africa are HIV-positive.
- The infant mortality rate is 45 per 1000 live births.
- The maternal mortality rate is 230 per 100 000 live births.
- 37% of households survive on less than R.1000 per month
- 60% of the poor get no social transfers.
- 52% of Africans are poor, with poor meaning that the household income is less than R800 monthly.
- While Africans make up 78% of the population, they account for 95% of the poor, whilst 17% of Coloureds are poor with 5% amongst the Indians and Whites.

By 2006 HIV/Aids had been responsible for so many deaths that the worldwide HIV/Aids statistics (Gill, 2006: 26) indicated that 2.3 million children were living with HIV/Aids in some way or another. In 2006, statistics indicated that 5.5 million people globally were in some way or another living with the HIV/Aids virus (Gill, 2006: 27). Cullinan (2007) writes that the region of Southern Africa remains the worst hit area in the world, accounting for over one-third of all new infections and deaths globally.

Adding to the above figures, the Catholic Exchange (2008:2) writes that approximately 30 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa are thought to be infected with the HIV-virus. The UNAIDS global report (2008:4) more specifically found that even though the HIV-prevalence stabilized in sub-Saharan Africa; i.e. from 6% negative growth in 2005 to 5% negative growth in late 2007 per annum; the actual number of people infected continues to grow because of ongoing new infections and increasing access to antiretroviral therapy, i.e. from 9% growth per annum in 2005 to 11% in late 2007. Just the

percentage of females living with HIV has been noted as the highest in sub-Saharan Africa with a statistic of 60%. The reason that the United Nations Global Aids Report (UNAIDS, 2008:11) states for this statistic is that women in certain sub-Saharan countries, especially Botswana and Swaziland, are less likely to be economically independent and have not experienced legal reforms that recognize women's property and inheritance rights. In this way then, women who lack sufficient food are 70% less likely to perceive personal control in sexual relationships, 50% more likely to engage in intergenerational sex, 80% more likely to engage in survival sex and 70% more likely to have unprotected sex than women receiving adequate nutrition.

Coming closer to home in South Africa, when looking at poverty over a period of time one sees the difference in financial experience within especially the black population. Two quotes clearly illustrate the difference, the first out of the 1930's and the second fifty years later, out of the 1980's:

Monica Hunter, in the 1930's wrote the following: "Fathers also are often devoted to their children, and make much of them when small, carrying them about in their arms, fondling them, playing with them, and teaching them to dance". (cf Richter & Morrell, 2006:26).

In the 1980's one father said: "My children are not living ... In order for us to live we should eat. But now I am not working it is just like these hands of mine have been cut off and I am useless. Now life for my children will be difficult, they will scarcely eat. Now that I am not working – I do not know what I shall do or what I shall take and put against what". (Unemployed man interviewed in Lesotho, cited in Richter & Morrell (2006:26).

Richter and Morrell (2006:26 - 35) delved into the depths of fathering in South Africa, noticing that these two statements, even though they are separated by half a century, still displays much about what has happened to poverty and to the changing nature of fatherhood as experienced by men who are poor in South Africa.

In South Africa, the post-Apartheid government continues to emphasize poverty reduction as a national priority and has committed the country to achieving certain developmental goals that have been set for poverty reduction by 2015. These goals included reducing the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by half, the provision

of universal primary education in all countries, the reduction of the infant and under-five child mortality rate by two-thirds and the reduction of maternal mortality by three-fourths (May, cf Richter & Morrell, 2006 :143).

More specifically, Woolard confirms that households headed by women are more likely to be poor, for households headed by a resident male have a 28% probability of being poor, whilst households with female heads (because the nominal male head is absent) had a 48% chance of being poor. This is the climate within which many children grow up, often without a father or a male role model, and Woolard points out that this climate affects children's development. On the other hand, Silverstein and Auerbach (1999:4) reason that even though families without fathers are more likely to be poor, it could be the negative effects of poverty, rather than the absence of a father that could have lead to negative developmental outcomes.

In the African context, models of fatherhood that stress responsibility, protection, provision, wisdom and communal loyalty may well be better suited to sustain life and harmony, but over the past half a century, economic forces have wrought havoc on the labor markets. Unemployment levels are high and subsistence agriculture remains largely the preserve of women (Morrell, 2005: 84-87), with men struggling to face these challenges without falling into alcohol abuse or fornication. In the process, relationships with family, spouses and children become neglected and fatherly involvement with the children becomes significantly lower. On the point of fatherly involvement, Erikson and Grecas (1991) investigated how paternal involvement varies based on the benefits men have to exchange. These authors point out that upon investigation of a general population in American society they found there to be two groups of fathers who had the least amount of involvement with their children. The first group was the poor, unmarried, teenage fathers; whilst the second group was the upper-class fathers in traditional nuclear families. Furthermore, they found that teenage fathers were under-educated and under-employed and therefore, they could not make a meaningful contribution to the economic security of their children and generally did not possess the maturity to fill their place as involved fathers themselves. In the other group, they found that upper income bracket fathers were generally more interested in their own status and needs than that of their families, using their income to pay for other-than-mother childcare, whilst doing little

active care-giving themselves. The fathers that they found to have the highest level of active childcare involvement were those in dual-shift working-class families.

Upon investigating some of the works about fathers' tasks in some post-modern households, it becomes clear that the tasks of fathers are currently being complicated by what is referred to as the "*crisis in masculinity*" that is challenging the traditional masculine role (Faludi, 1999:81; Clare, 2000:132). Within this post-modern shift concerning the traditional role that a father used to fulfill, we see that more wives/mothers are going to the office to work and perhaps even earn more than the man of the house. The theme of this crisis has to do with the challenging and moving around of previously accepted displays of manhood as seen in the traditional view of fatherhood, e.g. the paternalistic family or the sole male breadwinner.

This view has not only been socially stigmatized and debased by commercial society and by modern-day feminism (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:229-231), but in industrialized countries like the U.S., financial constraints have made it necessary for both parents to earn an income, making it difficult for mothers to stay at home to raise the children. Given this mutual commitment to breadwinning, women find it increasingly difficult to shoulder the sole responsibility for raising children (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999:13).

However, research concerning the changing tendencies in South Africa has put forth that men are experiencing difficulty in trying to adapt to the emerging female conscience (Augustine, 2002:23). Augustine also noted that although men have been taking on a greater child-caring role and have been placing more emphasis on their relationships, such change still seems to be occurring on a very small scale in South Africa. Augustine attributes this slow change in gender roles to the normative structure of the patriarchal cultures in South Africa that makes role change difficult.

Morgan (1994:97-103) writes that family interactions take place in different ways between individuals of different genders, and it can even be said that gender itself can partially be shaped within family contexts. Morgan reminds us that it is important to take into consideration and understand how a specific family's relationships could have been constituted through the influence of the different genders in a specific family. He observes that family relationships could in the present as well as in the past have either

experienced a general feminization or have experienced a certain amount of tension between the men and their families.

As already mentioned above, the male's position within the family has undergone a sociological transition, starting with the traditional position that was once taken on manhood and moving through the shifts concerning the positions that men hold in their families' in the early-, the late-; and eventually in the post-modern era. Traditionally, male initiation rites were seen not only in the light of the development of adult identities, rights and duties; but also in terms of the formation of these male identities within wider social relationships. Just so, traditional patriarchy did not only refer to the domination of men over women, but also to systems based on interacting combinations of both gender and generation. Whilst patriarchy in general refers to the "*rule of the father*," male positions and masculine identities did not necessarily revolve exclusively around biological or social fatherhood. In this sense then, a mother's brother or an accepted male from the wider family or social system could play a fatherly role within the sociologically defined traditional model (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:224, 225).

The early modern position of the male within the family focuses on marriage and parenthood and is based on relatively stable notions of gender and hetero-sexuality. In this early modern model, male identity revolved around the importance of being the family's breadwinner, having the mature adult responsibilities of a wife and children; and settling down into respectability, duty and security (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:227, 228). The man became the bearer of class identity; whilst the location of other family members, his wife and children, depended on the class position which he held as the male head of the household and as the father to his children.

From here, the male's position shifted into the late modern period. In this period, the female's increasing professional advancement with its implications for the male and the children of the family became noticeably stronger. Instead of referring to "the family," the term "household" was now being used. Feminism was on the rise and with its rise the crisis around man's traditional position as a husband and father in the family started to escalate (Morgan, 1992:26).

Lastly, the current post-modern positioning of the male within his family has compromised male gender identity to such a degree that his gender identity is no longer firmly anchored in his family relationships or anywhere else. This can, for instance, be seen in the substitution of terms like “husband” and “wife” with terms like “partners” (Whitehead & Barrett, 2001:229-231). The process of male sex-role identity has also been influenced in this particular positioning of man, seeing that the psychological maturity of children within families can be linked to these children acquiring the appropriate male or female sex-role identity affirmations which would aid them in manifesting gender appropriate traits, attitudes and interests that would psychologically validate or affirm their biological gender (Marsiglio, 1995: 62-64). These sex-roles are understood to be patterns of social expectation, i.e. norms for the behavior of men and women, which are transmitted to growing children who are in a process of socialization (Connell, 2000:7). Many factors like the actual or relative absence of male role models, or changing female roles, could be seen as impacting on this process.

More research would be needed to ascertain a greater understanding of how fathering could relate to a man’s life cycle and career development patterns (Brod, 1987:42), but Brod confirms that it is true that the traditional male role of the breadwinner that initially formed part of the core of male identity, had changed because of the rise of feminism and various social changes that impacted even more negatively on the father’s role and identity within his family.

The above influences and other social changes are increasingly impacting on the re-negotiation of the meaning that is attached to fatherhood. The entry of larger numbers of women into the workforce during the second-wave feminist movement, and the fact that they continue to participate in the workforce even after childbearing, have impacted on fatherhood as well (Lupton & Barclay, 1997:1-11).

In keeping with the current climate, the media tends to focus more on the effects of employed mothers on their families, both positive and negative, whilst underplaying or ignoring the importance of the absence of the father from the family when he goes to work. This further strengthens unbalanced perceptions that propose that a father’s low family involvement does not harm him or his family (Gerson, 1993:188) in any significant way. To the contrary, fathers who looked for family commitments beyond the workplace

and who became more involved in actively fathering their children not only found unexpected pleasure and fulfillment in fathering, their families exhibited a combination of healthier traits than those where this did not happen (Gerson, 1993:188, 215; Parke, 1996:24). Research done by the National Literary Trust (NLT) in 2008 (p.1), for instance, found that an increasing amount of involvement by a father in his children's lives substantially impacts on children's educational achievement and ability to learn new skills and retain more information. The NLT found that the mother of a child is generally focused on aiding a child with his learning, whilst significant progress was proven to be made when the father of the child aided him instead.

Frost (1996: 16) confirms that one of the largest current problems in society may well be the growing absence of fathers from their children's homes, for Frost reasons it contributes to so many other social problems. Lupton and Barclay (1997:2) also confirm that they have found that fathers are the stabilizing, strongly influential role-players in children's lives, and they provide ways in which children can learn to face the outside world with confidence.

Several paradoxes and inherent tensions around the meaning of fatherhood can be found in contemporary western society, but generally, fatherhood is portrayed as an opportunity for modern man to express his nurturing feelings in ways that their own fathers supposedly did not (Lupton & Barclay, 1997:2). Fatherhood needs to be understood as a specifically gendered part of humanity that needs respect for what it is and it must not be compromised and subdued by feminine influence. Fathers should be seen as men who form the institution of fatherhood that has historically more often than not been constructed as social, rather than merely natural or biological (Hobson, 2002:245).

As stated in the paragraphs above, studies on fathers have been neglected because fathers have previously been seen as inferior to mothers in terms of their perceived ability to influence the developing child (Parke, 1981:4). However, more current studies do indicate that fathers who are both caring as well as demanding foster higher levels of self-esteem and academic achievement in their children (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:436). Such results affirm the importance of understanding a father's involvement in his family. Mothers form the gateways to the involvement of fathers with their children, for a

mother's reactions to a child's father carry with it substantial influence on the fathers' developing sense of competence with his children. A mother can either encourage or criticize and continuously correct a father's perceived involvement with his children, which can cause him to prematurely give up such involvement (Lupton & Barclay, 1997: 13).

Important to remember is that, for the most part, fathers, just like mothers, learn through doing, and therefore mothers need to be patient and encouraging so that fathers can develop the needed competencies which will eventually benefit their long-term relationship with their child (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:437). It seems to follow that a father is "made" not "born" – that there is a journey through which a man becomes a father (Lupton & Barclay, 1997:14, 15). In this process, the recognition and validation that a father receives is of great worth, because through it the role, authority and identity of the father is brought to the fore (Freeks, 2004:33). An important aspect of fatherhood that needs to be taken into consideration refers to the tendency to name the children after the father's family instead of the mother's family (Leslie & Korman, 1989:231,232). The bond that exists between the father and the child as well as the father's active involvement in the daughter or son's values and intentions, further solidifies healthy relationships and strengthens the balanced development of the child (Sharpe, 1994:124).

To be an adequate father requires a sense of responsibility and dedication which includes provision, nurture, protection as well as installing healthy values (Zulu, 2002:26). Children definitely suffer greater losses to themselves when fathers are absent (Marsiglio, 1995:57, 58). Such losses result in situations where children are deprived of the advantages of a father's love, compassion, interest and economic provision. Furthermore, the child's need for specific as well as general support is also lacking together with the active involvement of the father in the child's development when fathers are absent, which further causes a hampering of the child's development.

It is crucial to understand that the social integration of the child is aided by an actively involved father, who encourages the child to form social relationships and helps the child learn to express him or herself within these relationships (Moore et al., 1996:53-55). The role of the father starts at conception, through the birth process and progresses into the

further development and various life stages of the child, necessitating the father to develop and adapt with the child to the needs of the child as he or she develops (Marsiglio, 1995:78-81). The question can be asked whether a father is perhaps an identified and involved male person who attends to the needs of a child, instead of solely being a man who is responsible for the biological origin of the child. From here, the psychological perspective on fathering will be discussed.

4.3 The Psychological Perspective

Green (1976:110 – 113) writes about a good father being a blessing and an inadequate father perhaps being worse than having no father at all. Green, in the seventies, stated that although many men who partook in her investigations saw themselves as lacking in some way, they did not always know how to rectify it. Fatherhood is a job for which there is no training programme, writes Green, although the rare find in the seventies was already seen as the involved and affectionate father.

One of the mixed blessings of growing older, proposes Van Leeuwen (2002:189), is the experience of watching a younger generation of family members grow from birth to adulthood. This younger generation can include not only biological children, but also other children who need fathering in a family circle. But does it matter that a child has both a mother and a father? This is a question that has become increasingly relevant to ask in the light of increasing divorce and absent fathers in still existing marriages world-wide.

Silverstein & Auerbach (1999:1-21) write that a consensus exists that fathers are important contributors to both normal and abnormal child outcomes. Even though the traditional theoretical and cultural belief would hold that mothers are more competent at caring for children and therefore they should have the major responsibility for child care, especially for very young children, we can not underplay the importance of a father's involvement in a newborn or infant's life. Studies have found an involved father to have a calming effect on the infant (Feeney *et al* 2001, 116-127; Russell, 1983:98) Infants and toddlers can be as attached to fathers as they are to mothers. In addition, they write that even when fathers are not physically present, they may play an important role in their children's psychological well-being. It is from this point of departure that more and more research is being done, especially regarding parenting and child development.

Social scientists propose that the roots of a wide range of social problems, i.e. child poverty, urban decay, societal violence, teenage pregnancy and poor school performance can be traced back to the absence of fathers in the lives of their children. even define this phenomenon as "paternal deprivation", whilst Silverstein and Auerbach (1999:2) are of the opinion that marriage, as social institution, offers the structure within which responsible fathering and positive child adjustment are most likely to occur. Fathers have a unique and essential role to play in child development, especially for boys who need a male role-model in order to establish a masculine gender identity.

Firstly, the father plays a very important role in the infant's development. On revisiting some of the older sources that stem from the late 1960's, one finds Mc Candless (1979:107-111) who wrote that in many sections of American society fathers interacted a great deal with their children from birth, and very often shared all phases of childcare with mothers. Fathers are more likely to play roughly and tend to be more physically engaging with their infants (Easterbrooks & Goldberg, 1984:740-752). Fathers who are more actively involved in infant care and are more sensitive to their infant's needs, are more likely to form a joyful and secure relationship with the child as he or she grows up.

Fathers in general have been found to be more involved with older children than they are with infants (Gottfried et al., 1995:139-160). Their lack of experience with infants and toddlers, combined with the cultural prescriptions that generally favor mothers, cause fathers to be weary of interacting with their small children (Kaplan, 1998:132).

In the light of these findings around the levels of involvement of fathers with their children in dual-income families, the increasingly active involvement of mothers in the workplace have caused a greater participation of fathers with both housework and childcare when mothers work (Gottfried, 1995:145). The average contribution of men to housework and childrearing has nearly doubled since 1970, whilst the average contribution of women has decreased with approximately a third (Kaplan, 1998:132). In the past decade, childcare by fathers has shown the most dramatic increase, although despite the increase, men still participate minimally with their infants (McBride & Mills, 1993:457 – 477). Paternal involvement is positively correlated with higher intelligence scores, better academic achievements, greater social maturity, greater abilities to adjust

and a stronger internal locus of control (Gottfried et al., 1994:55-97; McBride & Darragh, 1995:490-497).

Given adequate encouragement and opportunity, fathers can do a good job with their children and they tend to be excellent managers, even though they are generally less involved in the day-to-day caregiving routines of their children (Kaplan, 1998:134). Fathers have also been found to be able to show nurturing behavior and they can be competent caregivers who can accurately recognize the meaning of their infant's cries and are responsive to their signals and sounds (Parke, 1981:4; Lamb, 1997:23-27).

Infants who are securely attached to their fathers spend more time looking at them and react emotionally when their fathers enter or leave the room. "Well-fathered" infants have also been found to be more curious and more likely to explore their environment and have more advanced motor development. It is important to recognize that fathers play an important role in both the intellectual and emotional development of the child through their continuous contact with their children, and this significantly increases the young child's cognitive development (Craig, 1986:94). The earlier a father is included and involved, including pregnancy and birth, the more advantageous for the bond that needs to develop with the infant. This in turn increases the child's security and enhances the infant's motor-, emotional- and cognitive development (Parke, 1996:122). Higher levels of self-esteem and eventual better academic achievement is also fostered by fathers who are both caring as well as applicably demanding (Coltrane & Collins, 2001: 436).

Many fathers want to become involved in caring for their children and can be competent in doing so, no matter what the age of the child. These fathers who take an active role in parenting their children think better of themselves and are even more satisfied with their marriage, whilst viewing parenting as less stressful (Saxton, 1993:316).

Fathers who are more involved in routine details of daily childcare have an even more beneficial impact on children than kind, but distant, traditional fathers have (Lamb, 1997:31). In general, children with highly involved fathers are characterized by increased cognitive competence and empathy, less sex-stereotyped beliefs and a stronger internal locus of control (Parke, 1996:126). The initial lack of skills and self-

confidence that a new father experiences could discourage many fathers from attempting to assume greater involvement with the children and it is here where the mother of the infant needs to play a supporting and encouraging role to aid the father in developing his own sense of fatherly competency (Allen & Hawkins, 1999:199-212). Such patience and forbearance from a mother is indispensable, because a father, just like mothers, needs to learn through doing (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:437). Freeks (2004:73) emphasizes that the father's involvement in a child's life continues into the important adolescent years and therefore needs to be built founded on the relationship that has been forged between the father and a child from the very birth or even during the pregnancy itself. It is the father's active role in the child's life that aids the child in creating his or her own identity, for optimally, the father needs to carry his behaviors, competencies and knowledge over to his child (Freeks: 2004:74).

Close father-youth relationships are associated with life-satisfaction, psychological well-being, lack of substance abuse and absence of delinquent behavior in adolescents (Ingoldsby, 1995:180-181). As adolescents spend less time with their families and more time interacting with the larger world, they encounter a broader range of values and ideas (Dacey, Kenny & Margolis, 2004: 210). If these values and ideas are left unchallenged and the child can not discuss it with a father who has built up a significant relationship with the teenager, he or she can perhaps internalize negative values and ideas in their striving towards autonomy in this stage of their parenting.

Some parents may consider their eventual parental goal for a son growing up in their household as him being successful in his own right and having a happy marriage himself with his own subsequent fatherhood. The child, in turn, could see a good outcome as his parents retire and turn the family business over to him to run. Ideas about where the son or daughter needs to develop can be very confusing, and when a child eventually reaches the age where he or she should legally become an adult and does not leave home, domestic complications arise (Lasswell & Lasswell, 1991: 335-336). In situations where a failure to successfully launch from a parental home, Parker (1983:3-27) mentions that an over-protective component from either the mother or the father or both parents can make it difficult for the child to leave home and find his or her own way.

One needs to consider research concerning the time when children have grown up and are leaving their parents' home. Studies done by Goldscheider & Goldscheider (1989: 95-96) show that in the event of a child reaching the age when he can move out of his parents' house, the situation yielded better relational and psychological fruit when such a decision was discussed and agreed upon between the father and the child.

4.4 Research studies into the effects of wounded fathers

Matthews' (2004: 27) study in the Western Cape region led her to propose that when fundamental change in or the breakdown of traditional patterns of family living occur, it can be a cause of gangsterism and juvenile crime around the world. Substance abuse, with alcohol abuse being the most prevalent, further increases violence. In the year before Matthews' study, Tlhoale (2003) wrote that alcohol abuse in families remain a serious problem in South Africa. Early exposure to dysfunctional family patterns may contribute to juvenile offences, as these types of exposures are likely to be detrimental to children's development and may create emotional problems. Lastly, Tlhoale writes that it would appear that certain factors do contribute towards juvenile delinquency, such as divorce, single parent families, and unemployment of parents, family violence, substance abuse and poverty.

Studies done on the parent-child relationships of children who become sexual offenders indicated that 78.2% of the adolescents who become sexual offenders were raised either in families where fathers engaged in emotionally or physically violent behavior and/or in the abuse of alcohol with the emotional life of the family in obvious chaos because of the volatile climate in the home. The relationships between family members were highly stressed, distrustful and unpredictable (Dh abicharan, 2004:1). In households where fathers are violent, children are taught that violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflict in intimate relationships. One of the critical factors in the etiology of sex offences is poor attachments between the potential offender and his parents during childhood.

Furthermore, Dh abicharan noted that many offspring of substance abusers have lower self-esteem with raised needs for outside affirmation and nurture, and higher levels of unmet dependency needs. Scientists at the Research Institute on Addictions (About.com. mental health, 2003:1) have found that alcohol-abusing fathers were less sensitive parents and some children of such fathers exhibited emotional and behavioral

problems. The social, emotional and cognitive development of children of alcohol-abusing fathers who spoke less to their infants, expressed less positive involvement and expressed more negative emotions was much lower than the norm. Alcohol-abusing fathers were also reported as having shown aggravation with their infants, which caused higher levels of anxiety, depression and temper tantrums than control groups at 18 months.

In 1999, 37 098 divorces were officially recorded in South Africa – a rate of 83 per 100 000 of the population. For South Africa as a whole, 83% of all registered divorces are from marriages lasting less than 20 years. The highest percentage of divorces is for marriages lasting between 5 – 9 years, namely 28%; followed by those lasting between 0 – 4 years (Monde Makiwane, 2004:2).

Research found that a significant number of children and adolescents showed a drop in academic performance, following the removal of the father from the home through divorce. They showed intensified separation anxiety, denial and avoidance of feelings associated with the loss of their fathers. Not only did the children exhibit a frustrated loss of identification with their fathers, but they also showed a general object hunger for males. These children were also more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression and anxiety, sadness, pronounced moodiness, phobias, aggression towards one or both parents and a struggle to perform well (Lohr, Mendell & Riemer, 1989:1; Bisnaire, Firestone & Raynard, 1990:1). From these findings it is apparent, even from the late eighties and early nineties that the impact of parental divorce and subsequent father absence affect children quite negatively. Recent research about absent fathers also verifies that boys of absent fathers experience difficulties in the areas of emotional, social, cognitive and moral development (Copeland Patrick, 2000).

Whether children grow up without a resident father or do have the physical presence of their father in the house with them, but are neglected or emotionally abandoned by their fathers, the effect is equally bad. It has been reported that compared to non-maltreated and abused children, neglected children have the worst delays in language comprehension and expression. Psychologically neglected children also score the lowest in IQ (Intelligence Quotient) tests (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999:11).

Long term effects of earlier disruption of the parental marital alliance are also indicated. For instance, adolescent girls who had experienced parental divorce when they were younger than six or between six and nine years old, reported becoming involved with alcohol or drugs in proportions higher than did girls from intact families. At this point it is important to remember that divorce is not a single event, but rather a cycle of negative events. The cycle begins with marital conflict, followed by dissolution of the current family structure, and culminates with the formation of separate households. In the majority of families, at least one parent remarries, forming a new, blended stepfamily (Hetherington, et al, 1998). Divorce has also been found to occur more frequently in second marriages, reinitiating the disruptive cycle of loss and conflict. This cycle entails economic stress, disrupted attachments and often separation from the family home and neighborhood (Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999:11).

Adolescent girls, whose experience of divorce occurred before they were six years old, more frequently report skipping school than did girls from intact families or girls whose parents divorced when they were between the ages of six and nine. The findings also underscore the vulnerability of adolescents whose parents have been divorced for less than five years. The impact of the marital disruption is most pronounced amongst girls, who report more depressive behavior and described social support in more negative terms than did boys from recently disrupted homes (Frost & Pakiz, 1990).

Even though research results about the physical absence of a father or adopted father figure have significant implications for children who stay behind due to trauma or divorce, investigations into homosexual and lesbian couples who have adopted children yielded interesting results.

Africa Christian Action for Reformation and Revival (2003:1-5) write about the South African High Court's consideration of whether homosexual and lesbian couples should be allowed to co-adopt children. They mention statistics in homes in the United States that report that 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes, 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes with 80% of rapists motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes. Also, 71% of all high school drop-outs come from fatherless homes, 75% of all adolescent patients in drug abuse centers and 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes.

Africa Christian Action writes that even if these statistics are so, they view mothers as equally important in the lives of children and the results of a motherless home are equally tragic. They view both children who grow up with two mothers with no father; or two fathers with no mother as being equally handicapped or confused in life and substantiate their opinion further by mentioning the work of Dr. Sarantakos (cited in Africa Christian Action). In his study in Australian schools, Dr. Sarantakos compared different aspects of development in children from normal marriages with that of children in homosexual or lesbian homes and found that overall, children from homosexual or lesbian homes fared much worse than children from heterosexual marriages. These children scored the lowest in language ability, mathematics and sport. They were found to be more timid, reserved, unwilling to work in a team or talk about home lives and holidays. They also reported to feel more uncomfortable when having to work with students of a sex different from the parents they lived with and were the least sociable. It was noted that the children from homosexual and lesbian couples were given more freedom, whilst heterosexual couples were more directive with their children. Lastly, Dr. Sarantakos found that children of married parents had clear future plans, while the children of homosexual or lesbian couples were more confused about their gender and were more effeminate irrespective of their gender.

There are also extreme cases noted in the mass media and reported on by the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP). A press release by the ACDP stated the shock of the party at the murder of four-year-old Jandre Botha, who died as he was viciously punished for refusing to call his mother's lesbian partner "daddy" (ACDP press release, 2007).

Another problem raised in research had to do with the average duration of a homosexual or lesbian relationship. The Triangle Project, a study of homosexuals and lesbians in Cape Town (2000) revealed that only 47% of the participants said that they were currently in a relationship, yet only 13.3% of the 47% had had only one partner in the past year. 60% of the men who were currently "in a relationship" admitted to having had sex with people other than their partners in the past year. Other research on this topic by co-authors McWhirter and Mattison (cited in Africa Christian Action, 2003), who are both homosexual, verified that from their study of 156 men in homosexual relationships

lasting from 1 to 37 years, only seven couples had at a totally exclusive sexual relationship and of these, the men had all been together for less than five years. The couples who reported relationships lasting more than 5 years had incorporated some outside sexual activity into their relationships, be it with sexual experimentation with other lovers or with alternative sexual aids, i.e. those who say they are in a committed relationship and were faithful were few and exclusivity and faithfulness to one partner was rare.

One of the saddest experiences that tend to happen to children when their parents divorce is that the protection of a father is removed from the child's life, whether in a physical sense or in a financial sense. It is happening more and more that mothers with children move in with live-in boyfriends and start experiencing financial pressure that take their focus away from the safety and well-being of the children. A survey into child sexual abuse and exploitation in South Africa (2005) reveals the general thought that the socio-economic impact of HIV/Aids on communities and families increases children's vulnerability to abuse or neglect. As HIV/Aids takes its toll on the adult population, large numbers of children are living with parents or caregivers who are dying of Aids and are unable to provide for these children economically. There are increasing numbers of child-headed households, where children are left without adult supervision or care. A study by the Centre for Actuarial Research (CARE, 2001) projects that the number of orphans is likely to peak around 2015 – at roughly 2 million in the case of maternal orphans under the age of 15. Paternal orphans under the age of 18 is expected to peak at 4.7 million in 2015, with the total number of children having lost one or both parents probably reaching its highest point at around 5.7 million in 2014. It should be noted that the number of paternal and double orphans estimated here may well under-estimate the true number of children without paternal care, as no allowance has been made in these projections for fathers who are alive, but absent.

If we consider what the 1994 Development Report of the United Nations (UN) Development Program refer to as "human security" Hubert (1999:23-24) notes that "human security" means safety for people from both violent and non-violent threats, entailing taking preventative measures to reduce vulnerability and minimize risk, and taking remedial action where preventions fails. It would be important, in the light of the

above statistics on HIV/Aids in South Africa, to focus on the implementation of these human rights, so as to aid the growing orphaned population.

4.5 Summary

The chapter offered an exploration of the sociological as well as a psychological exploration into what fatherhood is. The current South African context with its challenges of poverty and HIV/Aids was explored and we looked into how the traditional role of the father changed from the traditional era of fathering where fathers kept more of a distance and applied themselves to being the main breadwinners and protectors of their families. We also saw how the modern and post-modern era brought forth more female involvement in the workplace, which necessitated that co-providers had to become more involved with regards to parenting the children.

From here, the study investigated what the effects of heightened father involvement were on the growing child, as well as how parental separation and divorce, i.e. paternal denial and starvation influence children. The chapter continued with several further explorations in the field of psychology regarding the important role that a father plays for a child. The chapter finished with a look at relevant research into what the effects on children are when fathers become dysfunctional. The study looked into alcohol abuse, parental divorce, neglect and disinterest in children, to name a few. In this chapter, it became evident exactly how important a father's interest and involvement is in a child's life.

4.6 Preliminary Conclusion

In this chapter it was determined that a father indeed plays a pivotal role in a child's formation in life. Chapter 5 will use a qualitative approach to research, and in doing so will evaluate the responses of 8 male participants regarding their own personal perceptions around the phenomenon of human fathering as well as how it correlates with their image of God as Father. This will show whether an analysis and interpretation of their results will aid with constructing a foundation for the important attributes that are involved in human fathering.

CHAPTER 5

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF IMPRESSIONS REGARDING THE PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES INVOLVED IN FATHERING

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the fields of psychology and sociology described the current state of fatherhood. The changing face of fatherhood revealed that the role of a father has undergone many significant changes with the current state of affairs tending towards *inter alia* dual income families where fathers are more involved in actively parenting children than in the past. Some of the effects of parental separation and divorce were discussed, and a study of alcohol abuse in parents as well as appropriate involvement of parents in children's lives showed how significant a father's involvement in a child's life is.

This chapter will commence with a consideration of the field of social science, which will include an elaboration on how research is done in this field. This will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical considerations that are necessary when undertaking a qualitative research study in Practical Theology. A definition of quantitative and qualitative research flows from this, which will include an indication of the differences between these two types of research. This section will furthermore focus on the area of qualitative methodology, the process of data collection and a discussion of the concepts of population, sampling, validity and reliability and written description. Thereafter the structure of the research process will be explained, concluding with a look into the ethics surrounding such a study.

Following the first theoretical part of the chapter, the results of the research into eight male research participants will be discussed. These participants answered open-ended questions about their own perceptions of the attributes that they found their own fathers or male role models have portrayed in their lives. These open-ended questions will require written descriptions that offer the participants' impressions about what effect they thought their individual father figures had on their own lives. Another aspect that the open-ended questions will address is whether and how participants thought their biological fathers or male role-models affected their view of God as Father. The type of research process that will be utilized in this study is referred to as a phenomenological type of research process. Data will be collected through what is referred to within

qualitative research designs as written descriptions about the phenomenon of fatherhood.

An assessment of the participants' answers to the open-ended questions will reveal specific important attributes of fathering and God as Father as perceived by the participants. The chapter will then conclude with a summary of the interpretation of the research data.

5.2 Research and Social Sciences

Research itself can be defined as "the use of existing knowledge to find answers to problems yet unknown" writes Janse van Rensburg (2007:1). He further continues by stating that "research needs to be seen as dealing with a limited field of research within a broader context" (Janse van Rensburg, 2007:2) and ultimately states that it is the goal of research to contribute to it's own scientific discipline and to have a practical value so as to at least offer some contribution to practical issues.

The term "*social science*" can be understood as the study of human society and of individual relationships in and with society, or, as Neuman (2006: 6) indicates, an investigation of the beliefs, behaviors, interactions and institutions, amongst other aspects, that are found in fields like psychology, anthropology and political sciences, of which practical theology is one (Neuman, 2006:7). For instance, when considering the field of clinical research, it is found that clinical research has to do with the accrual of facts in order to improve the treatment of, for instance, human diseases in the future. The field of clinical research is also different from the social sciences in that a different type of design is followed. Clinical research moves within a quantitative domain, which focuses on "the systematic collection of information to produce findings that can be generalized (Derenzo & Moss, 2006: 3)".

Returning to the specific field of investigation that is involved in this study, the social sciences are sometimes referred to as the *soft sciences*, because the subject matter in this field of study has to do with human life which is fluid, formidable to observe and hard to measure with precision through the use of laboratory instruments (Neuman, 2006:7). In the domain of social sciences, qualitative research is generally of much better use than a quantitative research process because social sciences consist of less quantifiable

and more subjectively observable units than data that is found in a clinical scientific domain.

This study will investigate the personal and subjective impressions of eight male participants concerning the phenomenon of fatherhood. Such impressions or perceptions, being subjective by nature, leans itself more to a qualitative method of research because they are closely aligned to human perceptions and formulations, which are difficult to quantify. Further on in this chapter, the difference between qualitative research and quantitative research will be showed.

Practical Theology is specifically concerned with the Christian community. The term Practical Theology refers to a theory of action that is empirically oriented and concerns the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society (Heitink, 1999: 7). During an investigation within the field of Practical Theology, it is of great importance to establish the meaning of the general term "research". This will enable the researcher to isolate a more specifically suited research design for use in the research study that will follow in this chapter. Janse van Rensburg (2007:4) reminds that it is always the challenge to merge theory and practice.

Leedy provides a useful definition of the term research (1997). He proposes that: "Research can be seen as a process through which we attempt to achieve systematically and with the support of data the answer to a question, the resolution to a problem, or a greater understanding of a phenomenon (Leedy, 1997:5)." The purpose of research, according to Behr (1988:4), is the extension of knowledge so that more about a certain subject or matter can be learned.

Research is any form of systematic and arranged investigation to organize facts or gather data, and is often related to a problem that has to be solved. Within this description, research then, is the study of materials, sources and data in order to come to conclusions. Any research stands at the center of the process of learning about the world (www.essay-paper.net, 2008).

5.3 Theoretical Considerations

Heitink defines Practical Theology as a theory of action that is the “empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society” (Heitink, 1999:7).

Muller (1996:5) in turn proposes that practical theology be defined as a process that is systemically structured and continuously hermeneutical by nature. The aim of this process is to enlighten and bring a renewal to the human actions which relate to the Christian faith community (Strong, 2001:4). In this sense then, practical theology is concerned with the essence of what happens inside the community of Christ and investigates both what is taking place in the congregation as well as the activities of people that live inside the church as well as in the community. All the participants in this study either live within the community of the church or have at some point lived there and are still married to someone who currently actively participates in the community of the church.

Following from there, Practical Theology has a responsible role to play in critically mentoring practices in the church as well as in the community (Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:13). In short then, Practical Theology aims to be useful for the practical application of theological insights in the church and community. It involves both personal and family life, as well as the administration and educational ministries in the church (www.gotquestions.org.2008).

Following from this discussion, it becomes important to take a closer look into the relevant research methodologies available in this field of research.

5.4 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Empirical research comprises two categories of research, namely qualitative and quantitative research methodology (Schoeman, 2005: 137; Theron, 2004: 80). The following table will illustrate the fundamental differences between these two designs (Schoeman, 2005:139).

Comparative table of Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Approach

Quantitative Approach	Qualitative Approach
Epistemological roots in positivism	Epistemological roots in phenomenology
Purpose is to test predictive and cause-effect hypothesis about social reality	Purpose is to construct detailed descriptions of social reality
Methods utilize deductive logic	Methods utilize inductive logic
Suitable for a study of phenomena that are conceptually and theoretically well developed; seeks to control phenomena	Suitable for a study of a relatively unknown terrain; seeks to understand phenomena
Concepts are converted into operational definitions; results appear in numeric form and are eventually reported in statistical language	Participants' natural language is used in order to come to a genuine understanding of their world
The research design is standardized according to a fixed procedure and can be replicated	The research design is flexible and unique and evolves throughout the research process; there are no fixed steps that should be followed and the design cannot be exactly replicated
Data is obtained systematically and in a standardized manner	Data sources are determined by the information density of settings and types of observations and modified to enrich understanding
The unit of analysis is variables that are atomistic (i.e. elements that form part of the whole)	The unit of analysis is holistic, concentrating on the relationships between elements, contexts, etc.; the whole is always more than the sum of the parts

In essence then, the term “qualitative research” refers to any kind of research that produces findings that has not been arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:17). When purveying the above two main research methods, it becomes noticeable that the qualitative methodology of research is more frequently utilized by researchers in the social and behavioral sciences, and it is therefore a better fit with this specific study. A qualitative research methodology is also more frequently utilized by other practitioners in fields that concern themselves

with issues that are related to human behavior and functioning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:19).

A qualitative method of research can be used to study organizations, groups or individuals and can either be carried out by research teams or by individual persons. The purpose of qualitative research is usually to reach an original, authentic or reliable understanding of the experiences of human beings. One of the better ways to reach this purpose is through open-ended questions, like "tell me your story" (Silverman, 2001: 13).

Denzin and Lincoln (2003:12) write that qualitative research is a direct onslaught against the "value free-objective scientific model" for research. One of the major advantages in qualitative research, write Steyn and Lotter (2006:107) is that it has the ability to observe and analyze that which is actually taking place in its natural context. It is also believed that behavior can never be completely understood without understanding the convictions *behind* them as well as the context within which these behaviors took place (Joubert, 1992: 171). Joubert states that "qualitative research has shown that what people think is just as important as what they do." It can refer to research about any aspect of a person's life, behavior or life stories, but it can also be about organizational functioning, social movements or interactional relationships. Nonetheless, the data may be quantifiable, but the analysis itself needs to be a qualitative process.

When considering, for instance, the difference between a positivist paradigm that can be measured through quantifiable facts and a naturalist paradigm, where a qualitative investigation of reality is more useful, the thought that social science takes place in a naturalist paradigm prevails. In this paradigm, reality is not seen as single, tangible and fragmented as in the positivist paradigm, but rather as a holistic construction that is very difficult to quantify (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:37).

A qualitative approach can also be referred to as interpretivism, because it is a way to gain insights through discovering meanings by improving the researcher's comprehension of the whole phenomenon. Qualitative research explores the richness, depth and complexity of a phenomenon, for the underlying assumption of interpretivism is that the whole needs to be examined in order to understand a specific phenomenon (O'Brien, <http://ironbark.bendigo.latrobe.edu.au/~obrien/parad/index.htm>).

Steyn and Lotter (2006: 107-108) identified four distinctive features of qualitative research, namely:

- Qualitative research draws a connection between meaning and behavior or action.
- Significant behavior or action is studied within the most natural context possible for such behavior.
- The point of departure is that the researcher takes on the role of the “interpreter”.
- The participants are “active sense-making subjects,” because the way the reality of an experience is described forms part of the specific world that is being described. Therefore, the way participants attribute meaning is very important.

Qualitative research can be divided into five different types (Myers, 2002; Schoeman, 2005:141):

- **The Case Study:** Attempts to shed light on a phenomenon by studying a single case of the phenomenon in depth. The case can be an individual person, an event, a group or an institution.
- **Grounded Theory:** Theory is developed inductively from a corpus of data acquired by a participant-observer.
- **Phenomenology:** Describes the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction or assumptions from other disciplines.
- **Ethnography:** Focuses on the sociology of meaning through close field observation of socio-cultural phenomena. Typically, the ethnographer focuses on a community.
- **Historical:** Systematic collection and objective evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to test hypotheses concerning causes, effects or trends of these events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events.

The specific type of research that was utilized for this study is a phenomenological type of qualitative research, during which the participants, being men who are or at some stage in their lives were Christian believers, were asked to describe their impressions

concerning both human fatherhood as well as their impressions of God as Father. They were given open-ended questions to aid them in answering in an unprescribed manner and offer their subjective, personal descriptions regarding the above topics to the researcher in written form.

5.4.1 Qualitative Methodology

Research methodology refers to the process that is followed during research, be it quantitative or qualitative. It forms the core that underlies all research. Research methodology firstly controls and dictates the acquisition of data, and secondly also correlates the data after acquisition and extracts meaning from the data (Leedy, 1997:9). These two functions are responsible for the interpretation of the data in order to bring enlightenment around what the data means to the study.

Seeing that the methodological process of every research study is the core, it is crucial to identify the appropriate research methodology; for it is from this vantage point that critical decisions are made about organizing, planning and directing the research study (Leedy, 1997:9). Most researchers have at least one methodological technique that they prefer above the other techniques, like participant observation, interviewing or a type of unobtrusive measure (Berg, 2007:5). It remains imperative to keep in mind, however, that the method (s) chosen to utilize in the acquisition of the data will still to some extent impose certain perspectives on the reality that the researcher is measuring.

An example used in Berg (2007:5) explains: "When researchers canvass a neighborhood and arrange interviews with residents to discuss their views of some social problem, a theoretical assumption has already been made that reality is fairly constant and stable". Just so, reasons Berg, when these researchers make direct observations of events, they assume reality is deeply affected by the actions of all participants, including themselves.

In this sense then, by combining both or even several lines of sight, researchers obtain a more substantive picture of the social reality that they are measuring. This use of more than one line of sight or qualitative measuring is referred to as triangulation.

5.4.2 Data Collection

“Those who are not familiar with qualitative methodology may be surprised by the sheer volume of data and the detailed level of analysis that results even when research is confined to a small number of subjects” writes Myers (2002).

Seeing that the phenomenological type of qualitative research will be utilized in this study, it is important to identify the way that data was collected and to take a closer look at the requirements on the researcher. Glaser and Peshkin (1992:35) wrote that it is important for the researcher to define his or her role clearly so that the data collection can be as transparent as possible and so that any underlying confidentiality, validity and reliability factors can be defined clearly.

When studying methods of data collection, Myers mentions three main methods (2002):

- Interactive interviewing: People are asked to verbally describe their experiences of phenomenon.
- Written descriptions by participants: Participants are asked to write descriptions of their experiences of phenomenon.
- Observation: Descriptive observations of verbal and non-verbal behavior.

This qualitative study will be making use of written descriptions in which participants describe the phenomenon of fathering. The participants' written descriptions will be lead by an open-ended questionnaire that will at each question prompt the participant to either complete the question with as much information as he sees fit, or with questions that give participants the opportunity to freely describe the aspect of the phenomenon that is investigated by that question.

5.4.3 Population

The term “population” can be defined as: “The entire set of objects and events or group of people which is the object of research and about which the researcher wants to determine some characteristics” (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:84). Another way of looking at population is to say that it is the sum total of the analyzed units (Bailey, 1994:83), with the analyzed units referring to what the researcher is studying.

The population for this study consists of eight all-male participants who are currently Christian believers, or who at some stage in their lives were Christian believers. The sample group was selected from this population. The reason for limiting this study to an all-male population is so that the study can focus on the specifics of the investigated topic for a specific gender, without still needing to discern in the practice-theoretical section of this report between what role gender would play in the responses of the participants.

5.4.4 Sampling

It would have been ideal if the whole population could have been included in the study, but such an inclusion would have been logistically unobtainable and geographically unreachable, for the total population is too numerous to grasp. Babbie and Mouton (2001:291) write that sampling is necessary "... to allow a researcher to make relatively few observations and generalize from those observations to a much wider population." In this sense, the sample that has been selected will consist of elements or units that have been chosen out of the population (De Vos, 2002:1999).

Participants were selected through a random sampling process to be part of the sample of male participants who either are currently or at any stage in their lives were Christians. Eight male participants were selected and none of them were given any previously written material on the phenomenon of fathering as they had experienced in some way or another in their lives. All participants were given the same document to complete as well as the same time limit. None of them had any help completing the open-ended questions on their research documents. All the males were chosen from the white ethnic group so as to further limit the study past the exclusion of females. Ages of participants ranged between the age of 19 and 45 years and all participants had similar socio-cultural backgrounds. The reason for defining these specific parameters is to attempt to isolate the phenomenon in as clear as possible a manner. The group of participants can be defined as a focus group, meaning that the participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that in some way relate to the topic of discussion (de Vos, 2002: 305).

5.4.5 Reliability and Validity

5.4.5.1 *Reliability*

The concept of reliability in a research process refers to the necessity for data to be collected in a consistent manner and the context within which it is collected to be considered when collecting such data at all times. For the sake of reliability, it remains important that identical or similar results always be achieved under identical or similar circumstances (Neuman, 2003: 178, 388). Reliability is strengthened when the same or similar results are achieved, even under different circumstances (Neuman, 2003:179).

A similar clarification of reliability is proposed in De Vos (2002:168), namely that reliability is “the accuracy or precision of an instrument; it’s the degree of consistency or agreement between two independently derived sets of scores; it’s the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument yield the same or similar results under comparable conditions.” Synonyms for reliability are dependability, stability, consistence, predictability, accuracy, reproducibility, repeatability and generalizability, indicating that research is reliable only to the extent to which either other administrations of it or a comparable instrument can consistently yield similar results (De Vos, 2002:168).

5.4.5.2. *Validity*

Certain considerations around validity need to receive attention when doing qualitative research (Silverman cf Steyn & Lotter, 2006:108):

- Does the methodology of the research fit the nature of the research questions?
- Is the connection with the existing knowledge or theory clear?
- Are the criteria to be used in the selection of participants portrayed clearly?
- Does the sensitivity of the research methodology fit the nature of the questions?
- Was there a systematic data collection?
- Is there reference to an appropriate procedure of analysis?
- How systematic is the analysis?
- Is enough time given to the discussion of the reasons for any possible categorizations, concepts and themes of the collected data?
- Is there adequate discussion of the evidence for or against the researcher’s arguments?

- Is there a clear distinction between data and interpretation?

The answers to these questions will then determine the validity of the research study.

5.5 Written Descriptions

This study is a phenomenological type of qualitative research which utilizes written descriptions by participants as a data collection method. The open-ended questionnaires are handed out to the participants after an explanation of all the relevant ethical issues. The participants are given a week to complete the questionnaire after which they have to hand in their own, individually written descriptions of the phenomenon of fatherhood in their own lives, whether pertaining to the human fatherhood that they are acquainted with or concerning their extrapolating perceptions regarding God as their Father.

5.6 Research Design

Creating an effective research design is likely to be one of the most difficult and eminently useful tasks when planning research, because an effective research design links abstract and stylized concepts and questions with the empirical world's complexities and challenges. A research design must be both specific and highly flexible. There is no single research model that one must or has to follow. Numerous alternatives should always be considered before making decisions on which research design to follow (King *et al.*; 1994, 38-40.)

Seeing that the research in this study takes place within the domain of the social sciences, a qualitative research design will be utilized. Berg (2007:2) agrees that qualitative procedures often deliver a greater depth of understanding of the phenomenon that is studied. The criticism against a qualitative design could however be that its practice is sometimes seen as being non-scientific and therefore, invalid. Therefore, the elements of validity and reliability remain essential in a qualitative study.

The specific research design of this study can best be seen as an explorative and descriptive research design. In explorative research, the research is conducted in such a way so as to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon, community or individual

(Fouche, cf De Vos et al. 2002:109-112). Often explorative studies ask “what” and are most often found in areas where little or no data is available, but in the case of this study, the focus falls on gaining better insight into the phenomenon of fathering and therefore it possesses a component of an explorative study. The study is to a greater degree a descriptive study, for it presents the researcher with an image that contains specific details of a phenomenon or situation, social setting or relationship. A descriptive study often consists of questions that focus on “how” and “why” (Fouche, cf de Vos et al. 2002:109-112).

Descriptive research can have a basic or applied research goal and can be qualitative or quantitative in nature (De Vos, 2002:109). In qualitative studies, descriptions are more likely to refer to a more intensive examination of phenomena and their deeper meanings that lead to a more thorough description (Rubin & Babbie, 2001:125). As already stated, this study will utilize a qualitative research approach, with only eight randomly selected male participants that will be included in it. The rationale behind the choice of research approach and participants is that human beings are not homogenous (Du Plooy, 1997:33); they can therefore not be categorized in a quantifiable manner. Also, the complexities of human interpretation of the phenomenon of fatherhood may be limited by a quantitative research approach, for unlike qualitative research; a quantitative approach may not be as able to understand the subjective experiences of the participants in its context (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:153).

Qualitative research operates on a much smaller scale than quantitative research (Janse van Rensburg, 2007:8) and therefore it is important to narrow down the parameters of the population from which the random sample would be chosen in order to choose the participants more carefully. For this purpose, all the participants were chosen from a white South African culture and all eight fell between the ages of 19 and 45 years. In addition, all participants were at some stage of their lives or are currently Christians. This sample was specifically defined in order to keep results as uncomplicated as possible.

All participants were given the same open-ended questionnaires, none were briefed beforehand regarding the specifics of the questions, all participants were requested face to face to write their descriptions and all were given seven working days to complete the

questionnaire in their own time. All eight participants were guided through the ethical information in the consent forms and asked to sign the document informing them of the ethical considerations and their choice in signing the informed consent document. The results will be kept in a fire-proof vault for the next five years.

In this specific research study, the data was gathered through a phenomenological type of qualitative research making use of written descriptions by participants who were given precisely the same open-ended questions that required that they write down their own subjective descriptions of their experiences of the phenomenon in this study. The phenomenon, as defined in previous chapters has to do with their own personal, subjective experiences of fatherhood in their own lives, as well as how these personal experiences impacted on their relationship with God as their Father.

All the participants in this study either live within the community of the church or have at some point lived there and are still married to someone who currently actively participates in the community of the church.

5.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues can be seen as the concerns, dilemmas and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research. Ethics define what actions are or are not legitimate, or what "moral" research procedure might be involved in a study (Neuman, 2006:129).

The ethical considerations that are followed by the University of the North-West, Potchefstroom Campus, have been included in the process within this study in the sense that the participants were all required to sign an ethical statement that is acceptable according to the requirements of the University of the North-West. (<https://intranet.nwu.ac.za/opencms/export/intranet/html/en/inimrs/researchsupport/ethics/index.html>.)

It can be said that the moment human beings become involved with social sciences, ethical issues are likely to arise. In the social sciences, ethical issues are pervasive and complex, for the collection of data should never be obtained at the expense of human beings (Williams, Tutty & Grinnell: 1995:67).

Social scientists, perhaps to a greater extent than the average citizen, have an ethical obligation to their colleagues, their study population, and the broader society, for it is in their nature to delve into the social lives of other human beings (Berg, 2007:53). This, and for reasons such as possible lawsuits, writes Berg, researchers in the social sciences must ensure the rights, privacy and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies. According to Neuman (2006:129), few ethical absolutes exist. He proposes that there are few fixed rules, although agreed-on principles can be found, and states that there might even be a problem with these principles conflicting in practice. Neuman for instance argues that many ethical issues involve a balance between two values: the pursuit of scientific knowledge versus the rights of those being studied or of others in society.

Furthermore, the ethics involved in the use of human subjects in research projects requires careful scrutiny, with many disciplines having their own codes of ethical standards with respect to involving human subjects (Leedy, 1997:116). As Babbie (cf Berg, 2007:53) so accurately points out: "All of us consider ourselves ethical; not perfect perhaps, but more ethical than most of humanity." The unfortunate problem here, writes Berg, is that in social sciences the ethical considerations can be very subjective and driven by the zeal of the social scientist. It is in this light then that certain ethical principles have been laid down and maintained.

The principles of ethical propriety that lie at the base of most of these guidelines resolve into the simple considerations of fairness, honesty, openness of intent, disclosure of methods, the ends for which the research is executed, a respect for the integrity of the individual, the obligation of the researcher to unequivocally guarantee individual privacy, and an informed willingness on the part of the subject to participate in the research activity voluntarily (Leedy, 1997:116).

Strydom (1997:223-232) phrases it a bit differently, when the following aspects are mentioned, like the physical and or emotional injury to the participant, the aspect of informed consent, keeping in mind a caution against misinforming and or misleading participants, the importance of not indulging in bribes or rewards, not injuring the privacy of the participant and lastly, the making available of all necessary information to the participant. As can be seen, different authors identify different ethical issues. For some

authors it suffices to create a broad classification of a few issues, whilst other authors prefer to insert much more detail in their classifications (De Vos, 2002:63).

Derenzo and Moss (2006:4) write that it is necessary for each study to include an ethical aspect that is not separated from the scientific objectives. They furthermore state that ethical and scientific considerations are intertwined. It remains important to remember that if the communication of ethical questions is not taken seriously, the decisions and actions of researchers, as well as the education of others around the work involved in social sciences, could ultimately lead to the rights of those who are studied being taken too lightly (Miles & Huberman, 1994:289). Bearing in mind all the above, this study pursued the ethically correct way in its approach.

5.8 Case Studies

The following section will identify and process the results of each question in the phenomenological study into descriptions about human fatherhood and the Fatherhood of God. Three categories were defined from the previous chapters' literary enquiry and out of theological writings about the Fatherhood of God. The first category has to do with the participants' impressions of their biological fathers or male role-models, whilst the second category has to do with the impressions that each participant holds about God as Father. The third and last category has to do with the resulting impressions the participants hold about the three basic areas of what a father should be, who he thinks he became because of his own father; and lastly, how he views the effect that God as Father had on his development. These open-ended questions were formulated in an attempt to describe as best possible a wider spectrum of impressions, so as to enrich the results of this phenomenological study. Questions were asked from various angles to see if results will stay consistent. This element can be viewed as a triangulation process that attempts to see if similar impressions that are able to correlate with impressions that have been asked differently can be found. The original anonymously written descriptions can be found in the back of the study under Annex 1. The questions were phrased in an open-ended manner to encourage individuality of descriptions of their images of their fathers or male role-models.

5.8.1 Case Studies 1-8

Case study 1: Professional and successful corporate man, 45 years of age, married with two children – biological father is alive and has contact.

Case study 2: Tradesman, 44 years of age, married with three children – biological father is alive and has contact.

Case study 3: Junior travel agent, 19 years of age, single – biological father is alive and has contact.

Case study 4: Junior IT specialist, 22 years of age, single – biological father is alive and has contact.

Case study 5: Student Attorney, incarcerated in prison for 20 years for murder, 40 years of age, married with one child – biological father is deceased.

Case study 6: Writer and sales person, incarcerated in prison for 12 years for rape and murder, 36 years of age, married, no children – biological father is alive and has contact.

Case study 7: Security worker/own business as handyman, 39 years of age, single, one child – little contact with either biological father or stepfather.

Case study 8: Sales consultant and ex-policeman, 43 years of age, married, one baby girl - biological father died when he was 4 years old.

From here onwards the numbers 1-8 will be used to refer to Case studies 1-8 as described above.

5.8.2 Category 1: Impressions of biological father or male role-model

5.8.2.1 *Childhood impression of father*

- 1: Hard-working, resentful about mistreatment, busy with higher things, quick-fisted. Loving but fearsome.
- 2: Loving, supportive, understanding and guidance with life-skills.
- 3: Someone you look up to, caring, loving and teach you right from wrong, supportive and wise.
- 4: Strict, but playful, caring in his own non-understandable way.
- 5: Loving, but somewhat weak, mother controlled finances and administered discipline.

- 6: Someone who provided safety and security, who laid down rules, made me feel safe, an invincible super-hero, loved being in father's presence, but feared his anger and punishment for transgressing his rules.
- 7: Father was the "man of the house," who made the decisions and handed out discipline when necessary.
- 8: Absent father was the image presented, virtually non-existent.

5.8.2.2 *Primary need from father while growing up*

- 1: Affirmation and closeness, being loved and understood, whilst being encouraged and accepted for his failures.
- 2: Love and always being there for him, help with challenges and support in life.
- 3. Love and caring, be there for him when he needs him the most.
- 4. That he had to be there for him.
- 5. That his father would believe in himself, instead of lying about his importance and holding onto his inferiority complex.
- 6. Affirmation, to praise him and be proud of him, to want to spend time with him, pats him on the back and say well-done.
- 7. Guidance, support, his father didn't push him to do well at school, instead only encouraged him to never back down from a fight, regardless.
- 8. Love, closeness and unconditional support, guidance, direction and encouragement.

5.8.2.3 *Primary childhood injury by father*

- 1. Feeling that father was disappointed in him.
- 2. Father never spent quality time with him. Just had to do what he was told to do, always more work to do and no time allowed for friends.
- 3. Father thought he wasn't good enough when he came third in a wake boarding competition.
- 4. When he said he cared for his father, his father would make fun of him.
- 5. The damaging effect that it had on him when his father broke his neck and underwent a personality change.
- 6. His father's absence and emotional disengagement in his life, sometimes being present and still remaining absent, felt like a huge void to him.

7. When his father left his mother and said it wasn't his fault, but didn't make contact with him, only came to fetch his brother.
8. He was never there, father died when he was four.

5.8.2.4 Prominent positive impression from father-son relationship

1. Involved and active participation of father, affirmation of his performance and acceptance.
2. Father at some point drawing him closer and teaching him how to work, about ethics and responsibility.
3. When he started to work with his father and they started to bond in a closer way.
4. Father taught him to be honest and just.
5. Time spent together riding horses and participating in various activities together with his father.
6. Even when he let his father down and disgraced him, his father never turned his back on him and never gave up on him.
7. The birth of his own son brought him to a realization that his relationship with his father had to change so that his son would have a grandfather.
8. Unsure how to answer, perhaps consoling himself with the possibility that life with his father might have been worse than life without his father.

5.8.2.5 Father's internalized projected opinion of son

1. That he is intelligent and industrious.
2. That he was soft and needed to become a man, therefore his father pushed him to work.
3. That he was never going to amount to anything, because his father would say that he is useless.
4. That he was always in a daze.
5. That he was somewhat irresponsible and rebellious after the relationship breakdown caused by his father breaking his neck.
6. Thought he was a good child and that the way his father brought him up was the best way, even after he was arrested, his father still believed it.
7. Doesn't know what his father thought about him, stayed in boarding school on his own and tried to deal with life himself.

8. No opinion from his father's side, for he had died too early.

5.8.2.6 *Son's internalized perception of father*

1. Intelligent, respectable and moral man with high standards on himself and others.
2. Unfair, not letting him play with his friends.
3. The greatest person ever, amazing and never does anything wrong.
4. Someone he has a lot of respect for.
5. Caring and wise, but didn't teach him to take responsibility for his own actions.
6. Someone who he looked up to and respected, his hero and role-model, but he believed that he wasn't good enough for his father.
7. Spineless, for he would stand with his new partner against his own kids, even when she was wrong, also supporting her children at the cost of his own.
8. Didn't know him.

5.8.2.7 *Lowest point in son's life and father's reaction*

1. When son experienced medical trauma, father tried to help, but still respected son's wishes.
2. When his sister died and his father withdrew completely and went back to drinking. He then couldn't understand this and started to hate his father for what it was doing to them.
3. When parents got divorced because his father was cheating on his mother with another woman. His father said that he would always be there for him, but he wasn't.
4. He did very badly with mathematics and got a very long speech from his father.
5. When he was arrested for murder, his father said that he didn't condone his actions, but he was still his father's son and he loved and supported him unconditionally.
6. When his father broke down in front of him when he was in prison, he doesn't want to expound on it.
7. His father was absent for both the high and the low points in his life. He was out of the house between ages 17/18, living on his own, without a

father figure.

8. All the low points in his life he had to handle alone without any support from a male role model.

5.8.2.8 Peaks of son's life and father's reaction

1. When selected as head boy in std. 5, first team rugby in Matric, officer in the army and achieved at varsity, father congratulated him and was happy with him.
2. When he got married, got his trade and his children were born, he realized what his father had been trying to teach him in how to conduct himself and take care of his family.
3. When his father started to go back to church, because his father then became a lot nicer and kinder and could then be there for him, when he needed him most.
4. When he started going out with his first girlfriend, his father looked at him funny and was somewhat astounded.
5. When he achieved in sporting events such as endurance horse-riding and athletics, as well as when his child was born; his father reacted with pride and showed extreme pleasure.
6. All the times when his father did things together with him on their own. Unfortunately, these were so few and far between that he can't remember any of them.
7. When his son was born, but his father was living in Saudi Arabia at that time and he can't remember if his father even congratulated him. His father has never said "well done" on anything he achieved and that's why he thinks achievements became unimportant to him.
8. He went through all his peaks unsupported by any male role model or father figure.

5.8.3 Category 2: Impressions of God as the participant's Father

5.8.3.1 Impression of God as our Father

1. Caring, loving, giving, serving, forgiving, but strict when necessary.
2. The ultimate father, that all fathers should be like him in the ways He loves, cares, protects, picks up and provides for His children.

3. Kind, loving, caring, wise and amazing.
4. A Father of love.
5. That He is vengeful, uncaring and has a sick sense of humor.
6. A loving and protective Father, everything his earthly father is and much more, never letting one down, always coming through for his son, even when he didn't understand what his Father was doing in his life, never abandoning him, his absolute super-hero.
7. God the Father does exist and He is strong, strict, fair and loving. He will not be tempted, is strict in His guidance, He will allow you to make mistakes, so you can learn from them, sometimes over and over until you get it right. He will never ridicule you, will always be there to pick you up when you fall, always love you no matter what even knowing what you are still going to do in the future.
8. He is what the participant felt he missed out on as a father figure. A Father who is attentive and present, giving advice and discipline in a loving, warm way.

5.8.3.2 High point between the participant and God as Father

1. When he understood God's true character and unconditional acceptance and love, His good intentions and positive guidance.
2. When he re-dedicated his life to Him it made him believe that God really cared for him and that He loved him for who he was and not for what others thought of him.
3. When he was going to church, because He made him believe that there is more to life.
4. When he stressed in his Matric examination, it felt like He picked him up and that He was there for him.
5. When he first became a Christian, but then he became disillusioned and felt that he constantly had to seek justification for His "so-called blessings."
6. The many times in prison that He saved his life, when He kept him going and never allowed him to give up, when God released him from prison, saved his life from criminals who tried to rob him, gave him a beautiful wife, friend, companion ... an endless list.
7. Recently finding a relationship with God and working on it, having received a calmness that he cannot really explain to anyone, after handing his life over to God.

8. God has answered both spoken and unspoken prayers. When he trusted God to be dependable and willing to answer prayer in spite of him and his weaknesses.

5.8.3.3 Low point between the participant and God as Father

1. When he sinned and turned away from God, ignoring Him, although God brought him back and kept on accepting him.
2. When things started going very wrong for him, he started asking why and when he was going to get a turn, as he was always helping others. He felt that God had forgotten him and that he was doing something wrong, because he couldn't get anything to work.
3. When his biological father's business went bankrupt and the effect it had on his biological father, made him believe that there was no God in the world.
4. When he repeatedly said to himself "Isn't suicide an option?" At that time he didn't think about God.
5. When God appeared to be uncaring, callous and vengeful.
6. The days before he came to know God, these were days when he blamed God for everything that went wrong in the world and in his life.
7. When he lost his job, even though he could only blame himself, there was a side of him that questioned God and His plan for him and his future. He is still waiting for the answers and sometimes gets worried that they may come too late, although he knows that God will never let him suffer, anxiety still sets in.
8. There is honestly no negative, for God has always been dependable and he recognizes that he has always been the author of his own negatives in his life.

5.8.3.4 One thing that bothers the participant about God

1. Why does God not intervene when man is destructive?
2. No matter what he does, God is always there for him, never giving up on him, even he can't understand why not, because he doesn't always play his own part the way he should.
3. It is that he has never ever seen God and that He is never there for him when he needs him.
4. It bothers him that bad things sometimes happen.
5. Can't answer, because he doesn't believe in God anymore.

6. That God doesn't always do what he expects of Him, which he doesn't necessarily see as wrong or bad, but it does mean that he has to really exercise his faith and that is sometimes difficult to do.
7. Nothing bothers him about God, just what people say and their misconceptions about God and religion. Everyone gets a message when they read their Bibles, it isn't necessarily the same message, so there's no right to enforce one's own message or belief on others, it's people's duty to bring God into others' lives and let them experience His love and glory, instead of choking them to death with what one thinks God's message is for them.
8. The fact that He is not a physical presence causes him to have to show faith and trust in Someone Who is not physical in nature and this makes truly trusting and depending on Him difficult in day to day issues.

5.8.3.5 *One thing that the participant wishes for the most from God*

1. He wants a better understanding of God's will and guidance.
2. That he can be much closer to Him and have an exciting relationship. That he can be able to leave all his challenges with God and not keep taking them back and trying to solve them himself.
3. He wants God to make it easier for his mother, because she is in so much debt from his father's business.
4. That God the Father would love him.
5. Nothing.
6. That He shapes and moulds him and shows him how to be a good father, husband and citizen.
7. Is that He never leaves his side and always be there to guide him down any troubled path he walks, be it his relationship with his own father or with his son.
8. Continued support and trusting that he will continue to seek after Him even though it is so very difficult to do most of the time.

5.8.3.6 *What the participant does not understand about God*

1. How God can stay loving and kind, in the face of man's ego and sin.
2. When he is in need, it always takes forever to get through the situation and sometimes he loses his way and his patience and this then becomes an even greater challenge for him.

3. Why does He make life so difficult and unfair, because he sees so much wrong with the world and He does nothing about it.
4. Why do bad things happen that cause him to feel as if he is being punished.
5. How can it be said or proven that God loves him?
6. He doesn't understand God's capacity to love and forgive.
7. There are lots of things he doesn't understand, but he has faith that in good time God will answer his questions.
8. Why God puts up with his nonsense. The least he can do is be faithful in seeking Him daily. His faithfulness is astounding.

5.8.3.7 What the participant values above all about God

1. That God is who He says He is – almighty.
2. To be even closer to Him as what he presently is and to trust Him completely with every situation and to experience even more of His love, wisdom and grace.
3. That God can do great things for nothing and that it all works together in perfect harmony.
4. That He is there for me.
5. Nothing.
6. His infinite capacity to love and forgive even when he doesn't deserve it, because it's just beyond human comprehension.
7. That God is the only being that can judge him and that God's judgment is fair, because He loves him.
8. His unconditional love, for He has proved to be concerned about him in spite of him. God the Father's patience with him is incredible.

5.8.4 Category 3: Impressions

5.8.4.1 Impressions of what a father should be

1. Grounded in faith with a strong relationship with God. Should live in the Spirit, which will help him to live in the fruits of the Spirit and act as a servant leader who can love and who is patient, forgiving, altruistic and who teaches his son.
2. A father should be the man of the house, he needs to govern with respect and provide a stable environment from a good Christian base. He needs to provide in all his family's needs and lead by example, not giving himself to things that will

have a negative effect on his family. He must make all decisions about his family with their best interest at heart. Install good discipline in his children without breaking their spirits, teach them correct life skills, teach them how to gain knowledge for life, be compassionate and supportive of his family at all times. These are the responsibilities that he believes God has given a father and made him accountable for.

3. A father should be loving and kind. He should be a person who teaches his son until he gets it right. He should be a caring person who will never abandon his son ever. Honest and open, fair, loving and responsible. A father must live up to his son's expectations as should a son and always be willing to help no matter what happens.
4. That a father must care and love him and support him. Also that he spends time with him without the son having to "nag" for it.
5. A father should be strong, loving and supportive; he should teach his child the concept of accepting responsibility. A father should set boundaries for his child and ensure that the child feels safe and secure, his actions should be constant and not dependent on his moods or feelings. When the child misbehaves, the father's love for the child should not be affected, he should allow his child to make his own mistakes and still always be there for him to encourage and support him.
6. A father needs to be available to his son on a regular basis. He needs to spend time with his children and teach them how to play sports or whatever the child wants to play. He needs to speak to his child and explain things, answer questions and listen to what they have to say. He needs to encourage and show pride and joy in their achievements and make himself available as much as possible. There needs to be a healthy balance so that children know that a father needs time for himself too.
7. Difficult to answer, because he hasn't had a father figure in his life, but hopes to live up to his son's expectations of what he wants him to be as his father. A good father is one that loves, disciplines with love and not anger, truthful in saying that he doesn't have all the answers, but will find the right one for his son, will be there when he knows his son needs him, be supportive of his son's decisions, but give guidance to his son's bad decisions from his own experience, not judge

or persecute his son for not always being able to succeed in what's expected, to let him let who he is and help him develop into who he is meant to become.

8. A father needs to be a person who is available and close when he is needed. He should love, protect and unconditionally support in all matters. He should be the person the child seeks out when he is happy and wants to share that happiness or when tough things happen and he needs advice and direction. He should be the guy who encourages participation in sports and other activities; he gives advice and encouragement without demeaning or forcing his own opinions. He should be gentle and circumspect when dealing with his child.

5.8.4.2 Impressions of what the participant thinks he has become because of his father

1. A mixture of disciplined actions and aspirations, making an effort not to backslide, but still backsliding regularly. Honest and open about self, judgmental, but tries not to hurt others, like showing his love to others, but strict about standards. He likes to give away what he has and not hold onto material things, for he believes that there is an abundance of everything from God, especially things that money can't buy, endeavors to make the world a better place in his own way.
2. He became the father he is, because of the role his own father played in his life and also wants to become more of what God wants him to be. He has been taught to be fair and to discipline his children without breaking their spirits and to have respect for others. His father taught him to be gentle, loving and good to his family and to respect them as individuals, he has learned to be passionate and to reward them with all the good things that he can give them and to be satisfied with what he is capable of giving them. He has learned to be honest and to respect his family, to encourage them to be the persons God wants them to be.
3. It's rough to answer, because it's hard to be open with someone who has broken him so much. It's hard for his father to talk to him; for he is scared he will say something wrong and hurt his son even more. They try harder, but it doesn't work out, because they are so different and have different values. They see each other almost every day, but never hang out, out of fear of losing each other forever if they do try to build their relationship after his father's affair.

4. An honest person who believes in fairness.
5. He thinks he learned wisdom from his father and took the best of what he had to give, he drew inspiration from various external sources to enable himself to give his own child the best attention and emotional support that he can. He has expressed to his child that he is not perfect, but will always endeavor to fulfill her needs as best he can. He believes that he has developed into a father who shows enough wisdom to acknowledge his mistakes, is in touch with his feelings and who is capable of setting a good example for his child.
6. There aren't many positives that he learnt from his own father that have shaped him into who he is today. He was a respected man in his community and an excellent rugby player, but invested no time in his children, who were just accessories. He rebelled as a teenager against what his father stood for, just wanting love and attention, but was not able to get it. The interaction between rebelling and punishment ultimately caused him to end up in prison, making him an ex-convict, although the prison experience shaped and molded him into a law abiding person who is God-fearing and focused on being a more productive member of society. Perhaps the negative interaction between him and his father resulted in a positive outcome. He has forgiven his father and is going to use his own experience and the ultimate guide of the Word of God and God's direction for himself to be a better father to his own children.
7. He was left to his own devices, and therefore he became a master of deception, lying his way in and out of any situation, he did just about every bad thing in the book in the name of having fun.
8. He thinks that in many ways he has struggled to mature into manhood due to the absence of his own father. His time spent in the Police's national service probably did not help for any adult maturity of his. The lack of interaction with a fatherly figure or a male role model definitely hampers his future development.

5.8.4.3 Impressions of how God as Father affected the participant's life

1. God protected his life various times in war situations and elsewhere, causing him to believe that there is a reason for him to live a bit longer. God has always been there for him, when he was the prodigal son who turned to God for His forgiveness, God took fear out of him. He doesn't fear losing anything that this

world can take away from him, nor does he fear losing his life, for has lost that fear too.

2. He has always been exposed to God the Father and to Jesus the Son, but have only in recent years started to spend time with God to learn more about Him. Every day brings something new that he has learned from God. God has made such an impact on his life that it has also affected his family positively in that he leads his family better and makes decisions whilst consulting with God, his Father, Who has made his own life so much more pleasurable and has made him a better father and husband.
3. When he was younger, God changed his life through both the church-goers and worldly people he spent time with. The one group would say that if he does wrong God will punish him, whilst the other group would say that God loves him no matter what. This gave him hope while growing up, because the world and people constantly change. Knowing that God loves him no matter what, makes him feel fulfilled.
4. God the Father has given him the strength to see through people's walls into what is going on in their hearts, as well as to see the goodness in people's hearts.
5. He lost his faith in God and therefore cannot respond on how he would have expected God to be.
6. He met the Lord while serving a 26-year prison sentence for murder and rape. He met Him in a dark and lonely place, but He brought light into his life and gave him a reason to live and to change. Everything he is and has achieved today is as a result of God's influence in his life. God has shown him that he doesn't have to do bad and rebellious things to receive attention and love. God showed him forgiveness and that He is always there for him and that he means something to God.
7. God affected his life by sending a Christian biker over his path that befriended him and accepted him into their circle. The rules of the club had to do with respect and taking responsibility for your own actions. They made him feel at home and he started growing, just like them, looking for acceptance, change and more of God.
8. He has always felt that his relationship with God the Father has been strained, because he tended to treat God as his own absent father. Over time, God has

shown Himself to be a dependable Father who does care and love unconditionally. He hopes and trusts that his own daughter will grow up to see him as the father that she needs and that her relationship with God as Father will grow into something much deeper than what he is currently experiencing.

5.9. Interpretation of results

The following data was extracted from the results of the open-ended questions. Each piece of data given by the participants to the questions was counted to ascertain what the important attributes were, as well as to identify which of the attributes were most frequently offered as important attributes. The questions were left open-ended and the word "attribute" was replaced with the word "impression" to aid the sense that the participant was offering his own subjective phenomenological description instead of him offering a clinical or quantitatively correct answer. The same sequence of the categories will be followed as under 5.8., and the results presented under 5.8. will be further integrated into a discussion under 5.10.

5.9.1 Impressions of participant's father

The primary impressions of the participant's fathers were that they were loving, disciplining (teaching and guiding was included) and bringing security (making decisions and being feared by their sons were included). Thereafter, being caring and supporting followed and lastly two participants reported that their fathers were busy or absent from their worlds.

5.9.2 Primary need from father while growing up

The most important need while growing up were identified by participants to be their need for their father's affirmation (that the father thinks that the son is okay, that he believed in his son, accepted and understood him); in close second place were the sons' needs for their fathers' "being there" for them (closeness, spending time, being present). The needs to be loved, needs to be encouraged and guided as well as the need to be supported and cared for were also prominent.

5.9.3 Primary childhood injury

The most frequently identified childhood injury was the father not being there (absent or no closeness) for the son. The second most frequently identified childhood injury was the lack of affirmation from the father to the son.

5.9.4 Positive impressions from relationship with father

The most frequently reported positive impression had to do with the fathers drawing their sons closer (active involvement), followed by the fathers affirming and accepting their sons as well as teaching their sons. Two participants had no positive impressions, due to one father being physically absent while the other had died early in the son's life.

5.9.5 Son's projected view of father's impression of him

All the results centered around one criterion, namely whether the father thought he was acceptable and affirmable or not. Two of the participants had no feedback from their fathers.

5.9.6 Son's impression of father

The most frequently reported impression was that the son respected his father, whilst two to a lesser extent criticized their fathers for not having been fair or not teaching them and one participant reported no impression because of his father dying.

5.9.7 Lowest point in son's life and father's reaction

The results of all the participants focused on whether their fathers "were there" (were present and involved) when they went through their lowest points in their lives, versus whether their fathers abandoned them in those times.

5.9.8 High points in son's life and father's reaction

The highest points in most of the participants had to do with whether their fathers affirmed them and were present and involved for them versus him being absent, not understanding and mocking their sons.

5.9.9 Impression of God as Father

The most frequently reported impression of God as Father was that He is a loving and forgiving Father. Following this, the impression of Him as a caring (giving, providing,

serving) Father who does not let his sons down or ridicule them, was presented. Next followed the impression of Him being a Father Who guides and disciplines and lastly, He was seen as a Father Who is attentive (present and protective).

5.9.10 High point between God as Father and the participant

For most of the participants the high points between them and God as their Father had to do with God being there and showing goodness in their lives. Those who did not have high points felt that God had let them down and abandoned them when they needed Him.

5.9.11 Low point between God as Father and the participant

Nearly all the results of participants had to do with bad situations, e.g. sinning or when work went wrong, where they either turned away from God or believed that God had turned away from them. One participant said that he had not experienced anything bad from God.

5.9.12 One thing that bothers the participant most about God as Father

The general issue that bothered the participants most, in some way or another, had to do with the question of why God doesn't intervene when unfair or evil events take place. Two participants said that it bothered them most that God wasn't physical, one lost his faith completely, one reported that nothing bothered him about God and one reported that he doesn't always understand God.

5.9.13 The participant's most important wish from God as Father

Most participants wanted God to stay close to them and guide them more clearly. Four wanted God's help, care and support for themselves or loved ones, one wanted the Father's love and one wanted God to mold him and form him.

5.9.14 What the participant does not understand about God as Father

Most struggled to understand God's love and grace. Two struggled to understand why life had to be so difficult and why God didn't help sooner when bad things happened.

5.9.15 What the participant values above all about God as Father

God's love and grace was valued most, followed by God's greatness and Him being almighty.

5.9.16 Impressions of what a father should be

The main impression of what a father should be had to do with him being loving and caring. This was followed by teaching (guiding and disciplining) the son. A father was also seen as needing to be present and involved in the son's life to support and encourage him. Another important impression was that a father had to affirm and accept his son. The last important impression that one of the participants mentioned was that the father should be a provider for his family.

5.9.17 Impressions of what the participants think they became because of their fathers

Five out of the eight participants reported that they feel that important values transferred to them from their father, but three reported that because of their father's either negative presence or absence in their lives, they were left vulnerable and distrusting, without anything being sown into their lives, rebellious or immature.

5.9.18 Impressions of how God as Father affected His sons' lives

Most participants had an impression of God as their Father who had brought something good into their lives, be it protection, new daily knowledge, Christians who accepted them, a future or help where needed. One participant said that he had lost his faith that God exists, because God had abandoned him when he needed Him.

5.10. Discussion of results

The above interpretation of the results indicate that there are recurring attributes ("impressions" in the survey) that involve the needs and injuries, the high points and the low points, as well as the impressions of the father's relationship with the participant. In the second category that pertained to God as Father, the same attributes were found and the results further correlated with the participant's impressions of not only how they perceive an ideal father, but also to what extent their fathers and God as Father had been part of their formation.

The most frequently reported attributes of biological fathers, male role-models and God as Father offered that the participants were concerned with:

- God the Father and a biological father's affirmation and acceptance of his son.
- God the Father and a biological father's love for his son.
- God the Father and a biological father as present (close and understanding) and positively involved in his son's life.
- God the Father and a biological father's care and support for his son.
- God the Father and a biological father teaching/guiding his son, included in this is both encouragement and discipline.

Looking at the above bulleted list, the two foundational attributes that were offered as most important in most of the participants' lives were their need to know that they are *acceptable* to their fathers and that their fathers *love* them.

5.11. Summary

This chapter offered a discussion of research within the social sciences. The differences between qualitative and quantitative research was explained and it was ascertained that for the purpose of this study, which takes place in the social science arena, a qualitative research approach was more fitting. Theoretical considerations like sampling, population, data collection, validity and reliability were included. Within the boundaries of this chapter a phenomenological type of research process was followed. Eight male participants were identified through the method of random sampling. The population from which this sample was drawn consisted of white South African males between the ages of 19 and 45 years, who were currently or had at some point in their lives been Christians. Ethical considerations were looked into and the results were offered, integrated and discussed.

5.12. Preliminary Conclusion

In this chapter that looked at the empirical research, namely chapter 5, it was found that the two foundational attributes that were offered as most important in most of the participants' lives were their need to know that they are *acceptable*, *i.e. to be affirmed* by their earthly fathers and that their fathers *loved* them. These needs were also extrapolated to God as their Father, and therefore indicated a foundational need whether in their human relationships with father figures or in their relationships with God as

Father. The other important needs of both earthly as well as their heavenly Father were identified to be their needs for a father to be present and involved, to care and support and to teach and guide. As said before, these needs are applicable to both human fathers as well as God as Father.

The following chapter will propose an integrated foundation from which a father can father sons more effectively. The perspectives gained in sociology and psychology will be integrated with the Biblically defined attributes of God as our Father; and further integrated with the qualitative research that was executed in this chapter in order to formulate a practice-theoretical model for the pastoral guidance that will propose a foundation for fathering which stems from the above integration of the Biblical, Sociological, Psychological and Empirical data

CHAPTER 6

PRACTICE-THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FATHERING

6.1 Introduction

This study started with a basis theoretical perspective on what Scripture revealed about God as a Covenanting God Who has repetitively reached out to man throughout the Old and the New Covenants. It also led to an investigation into what Scripture and theological literature revealed about the attributes of God as Father. Proceeding from there, a meta-theoretical perspective on what both the fields of sociology and the field of psychology offered about research findings concerning human fathering will follow. The model of Zerfass (cf Heyns & Pieterse, 1990:36-37) has been used in this study. This model consists of a basis-, meta- and practice theory. In this chapter the practice theory will be proposed; which, according to Pieterse (1993:52), is a theory which describes and explains the praxis.

Chapter 5 was an empirical research chapter in which the relevant qualitative data was assimilated through the use of a triangulation process. This chapter will contain an integration of the basis theory, meta-theory and empirical research data, which will be integrated into a practice theoretical perspective on fathering. With a practice theoretical perspective is meant a hermeneutical interaction between chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 in order to form a practice theory which will propose a pastoral foundation for fathering.

After having studied what Scripture reveals about the covenant between man and God (2.3) in chapter 2, the investigation focused on an exploration of the attributes of God within the metaphor of the Father (3.2). The Bible and various theological literary sources were considered in an investigation of what had been written about God as Father (3.4.) and His revealed attributes. The five proposed Biblical attributes (3.4.1. – 3.4.5.) were defined through the process of having been collected in the basis theoretical enquiry. The results from the meta-theoretical investigation and the empirical research results were then further triangulated with the five primary Biblical attributes to see whether they would be able to correlate with each other.

It needs to be kept in mind that the open-ended questions in the empirical study were also constructed in such a way as to triangulate the various questions of the empirical

study with each other in order to gain a description that would view the same phenomenon from different vantage points. In this sense then, two levels of triangulation can be found in this study. The first being the triangulation within the questions of the empirical research and the second triangulation being that of the Biblical attributes with the meta-theory and the empirical research results.

As stated above, the hermeneutic interaction of all chapters that were referred to above then produced a **practice-theoretical foundation** for fathers to use in fathering their sons. The format of this practice-theoretical will be that each identified attribute will be discussed first, after which that specific attribute's practice-theoretical foundation will be defined in a box format. Within this box format, specific aspects of application, namely the **Biblical and Spiritual foundation, Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation** and the **Therapeutic Foundation** will be defined with specific instructions under each foundation.

It needs to be noted that a male mentor with whom the child experiences an adequate fit should be assigned to the child. This mentor needs to be a person who walks with the child consistently for a period of one year. He needs to be willing to model certain attributes of fathering through how he lives his life. After that year he should be available to the child for the necessary follow-ups.

6.2 He is a Father Who Loves, Forgives and Participates

The Parable of the prodigal son reveals a father (Luke 15:11-24) who loves freely and extravagantly and who waits for his son to return home to him, without rejecting him. The father is one who is ready to forgive and who participates in his son's needs, by stretching out towards his son (3.4.1.). The field of sociology (4.2.) has also identified that the bond between a father and his child, as well as his active involvement in the child's values and intentions, solidifies healthy relationships and strengthens balanced development in the child. Insights from a psychological (4.3.) investigation also echo a similar message, namely that a father's involvement and love, forgiveness and participation has significant positive implications for, among other things the child's self-esteem.

Both the fields of sociology and psychology have found that the absence of love, forgiveness and participation lead the child to mal-adjustment and violent behaviors, poor identity formation, gangsterism, juvenile crime, substance abuse and poor school attendance and blocked academic achievement (4.4.). Lastly, the empirical research findings further *confirmed* that one of the most important needs that the participants voiced, had to do with their need for love and active participation (5.1.1.; 5.1.3.) and their need for forgiveness and participation (5.2.1.; 5.3.1.).

Practice-theoretical foundation concerning the attributes of fathering 6.2. He is a Father Who Loves, Forgiveness and Participation	
6.2.1. Biblical and Spiritual foundation:	Discuss books like P. Yancey's "What's so amazing about Grace" and short pieces of Scripture that talk about the Father's love, (Luke 15:11) and help the child to apply in his own situations in life. Talk about times that the child needed forgiving and where he or she needed love and participation the most in his or her life.
6.2.1.1. Action step 1:	Help the child to, on a daily basis, journal his or her thoughts and experiences about what happened that day and talk about where God as Father could have been in those situations, if the situations required His love or forgiveness (grace) and/or participation in any way.
6.2.1.2. Action step 2:	Set up a weekly prayer and discussion session in which the week's Scripture readings can be looked at and applied and, if necessary, prayed about.
6.2.2. Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation:	The specific mentor, as mentioned under 6.1. needs to reach out twice weekly to the child to enquire about his or her life with a honest interest in what is really happening in the child's life.
6.2.2.1. Action step 1:	The mentor needs to commit to the child that he will phone the child back and attempt to handle the issue at hand within 24 hours so that the importance of the relationship and the child's validity and value can be established.
6.2.2.2. Action step 2:	Find out where the child's preferred spot for meeting is and meet with the child weekly to build relationship and talk about the interests, challenges and obstacles in the child's life.
6.2.3. Therapeutic Foundation:	Be ready to work through any hurt, guilt, shame and fear of abandonment and rejection and enquire sensitively as to how the child is coping emotionally on a regular basis.

6.3 **He is a Covenanted Father**

Throughout the Old and the New Testament God portrays Himself as the God Who is in covenant with His children, repeatedly saying: "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Israel (Ex. 3:15; Lev. 26:42), whilst giving identity to those in covenant with Him. The cutting of covenant brings about a relationship between God and man, which in the New Covenant enables man to cry out "Abba Father" (Gal. 3:27-29; 4:6, 7). He is a Father Who takes His place as our Father and Who owns His Fatherhood of those Who have accepted Him through Christ (3.4.2.). The covenant sign of physical circumcision in the Old Testament (Gen. 17:11) and the circumcision of the heart in the New Testament (Jer. 4:4) also further confirm His Fatherhood over us.

In the field of sociology it was found that a male who took on a fatherly role over a child does not need to be a biological father, it could also for instance be an uncle or a family friend. The child would have the opportunity to identify with the male person and follow his example, whether positive or negative (4.3.). The affirmation and acceptance of a father or male role-model would shape the formation of the child.

In the field of psychology, it was found that children who grew up without father figures were more likely to have problems with forming involved relationships and showing affection (4.4.); having been left without role models who could demonstrate and affirm they struggled with appropriate behaviors in their relationships. Children of divorced parents, or of fathers who had either died, abandoned or neglected them and as a result never felt accepted or affirmed in their identities or behaviors. The empirical research verifies that most of the participants presented their most important need from a father as the need for his acceptance and affirmation (5.1.2.). Their most important positive impressions of experiences with their fathers also had to do with their fathers' acceptance and affirmation (5.1.4.).

Practice-theoretical foundation concerning the attributes of fathering
6.3. He is a Father Who Covenants
6.3.1. Biblical and Spiritual foundation: The mentor must present the Biblical Covenants to the child in an interesting way that stimulates discussion, so that the child can understand that Covenant has brought the child into a place of acceptance by God as Father, Who always wants to affirm him or her as acceptable and Who wants to

strengthen the child's understanding of his or her identity.
6.3.1.1. Action step 1: The mentor needs organise weekly semi-social meetings in which the mentor helps the child to discover his or her purpose and affirms his or her identity or purpose and this is developed through discussion.
6.3.1.2. Action step 2: Field trips to places that the child is interested in need to be included in these meetings, e.g. if the child is interested or it's in the child's purpose to become a stock broker, take him or her to the Stock Exchange to gain new experiences that could help the child's formation and reality perceptions.
6.3.2. Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation: Talk about what the child has partaken in during the week and accept and affirm to the child that he or she is in essence acceptable, even when they struggle to cope or "do the right thing."
6.3.2.1. Action step 1: The mentor needs to allow the child the freedom to associate with him openly, so that validity and security can be bestowed on their relationship and the child's sense of self-worth and self-esteem can be strengthened.
6.3.2.2. Action step 2: Actively attend the activities that the child partakes in and actively encourage and affirm the child's participation, helping the child to discern between his or her own self-worth versus the merits of their performance. Also, through discussion helping the child to not base his acceptance, worth or security on his or her performance.
6.3.3. Therapeutic Foundation: Be available for any issues of low self-esteem, confused identity or self-rejection, by listening and observing carefully and discussing any such symptoms with the child.

6.4 **He is an Accessible Father**

God revealed Himself to us as "our Father" or "Abba." The word "Abba" indicates a more familiar way of addressing a father, a more intimate relationship that speaks of closeness and presence (Rom.8:15). It also includes a greater extent of direct accessibility as made possible by the death of Christ. Therefore, Scripture states that we can approach the Father directly (John 14:6 & 7), for Christ has become the door to the Father (3.4.3.).

The sociological perspective has confirmed that it is of great importance that a child has access to the father or a male role-model who makes himself available to the child when needed. The traditional role of the father in a family was one where he tended to be

much more distant and detached, whilst the modern father seems to be much more engaged in the family and with the child (4.2.). From a psychological point of view, it has been found that when fathers are more involved and present in a child's life, even infants experience a calming effect (4.3.). It has also been noted that fathers who are more sensitive to children's needs and more actively involved with children cause children to be more joyful and have a more secure sense of relationship.

The participants in the empirical research also reported that one of the major attributes that they needed a father to have is for him to be present (5.1.5.; 5.1.7.; 5.3.1.), to "be there." This specific attribute of accessibility, if absent, is likely to bring about the wound of abandonment in a child's life. In this sense then, they needed to know that their fathers not only accepted them unconditionally, but also approved of them, giving them messages that affirmed that they are okay or good enough in their father's eyes (5.1.5.) It was also important to them that whether he agreed with what they were doing or not, he would still accept his child even though he might not be in agreement with their behavior (5.1.7.). This attribute is closely linked to the previous attribute of affirmation and acceptance. Here the focus is on being present in the child's experience.

Practice-theoretical foundation concerning the attributes of fathering	
6.4. He is an Accessible Father	
6.4.1. Biblical and Spiritual foundation:	After having discussed the Covenants with the child, the mentor needs to make sure that the child understands God's faithfulness in never forsaking His children and Him wanting to always be close to them, accepting them as His sons and daughters and giving them His identity, as referred to under 6.3. as sons and daughters of God.
6.4.1.1. Action step 1:	The mentor must at regular intervals read and pray with the child, experientially mentoring him or her in these two spiritual disciplines.
6.4.1.2. Action step 2:	The child needs to be allowed to attend various interesting experiences and events with the mentor, e.g. taking him or her with to places that the child shows interest in, for example sports, or other types of events.
6.4.2. Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation:	Find out which activities are important to the child and be there, be physically present and interested, e.g. if the child is playing

an important rugby game, be present and interested.
6.4.2.1. Action step 1: Make sure that the child understands that you will be within reach if something important comes up in his or her life, like a relationship challenge, a decision about something, a hurtful experience that took place in a social context or an unsafe situation in which the child needs some security.
6.4.2.2. Action step 2: Take the child for monthly treats that you know mean a lot to the child in his or her world, for instance, for some it might be to the movies, for others to play ball in a special place or perhaps for some it will be to theatre.
6.4.3. Therapeutic Foundation: Be sensitive about enquiring about any situation that could have left the child feeling abandoned and untended to.

6.5 He is a Living Father Who gives Life

John 5:26 explains that the life that God the Father carries in Himself, He has also given to Christ. He is not only the living God; God is the God Who created all life. Being this living God Who is also a life-giving God, He brings life through provision of what is needed to sustain life and to support life as a child's Father (3.4.4.). Without His consistent sustenance, which starts at the place of having been given life and proceeds through being sustained and supported and cared for, life would cease to exist.

Within the field of sociology, it was found that some of the essential roles of a father had to do with the father not only providing a protective shield, but also encouraging and supporting his child's safe experimentation and socialization (4.2.). In poverty stricken areas the father's physical ability to take care of and support his children were significantly hampered, which also affected how care and support manifested emotionally. The reason for this was that fathers who could not support their families felt themselves to be inadequate fathers who would then physically and emotionally withdraw their presence, care and support even further from their children.

Psychological research has found that children who were "paternally deprived" struggled to trust others with their needs, whilst children who had fathers who actively cared for and supported them, providing for their children what they needed, were better equipped for relationships as well as life (4.3.). These were the children who were also less likely to experience a failure to launch when reaching the appropriate developmental stage where they had to move out of their parental homes.

Participants in this study frequently reported their need for care and support from their fathers. They really valued their fathers providing physical care and support, security and emotional understanding of their situations and needs (5.1.1.). Another part of care and support also had to do with encouragement of their children after having supplied the necessary emotional and physical needs of the child in a specific situation (5.1.2.).

In discussing how God as their Father was caring and supportive (5.2.1.), quite a few of the participants said that the high points in their relationships with God as their Father had to do with Him showing His goodness, with not only being present and not forsaking them (as discussed under point 6.4.), but by Him also actively intervening by bringing a supply of goodness or provision to their lives (5.2.2.). This provision could be in the form of the necessary wisdom needed for a situation, emotional care and support that came from Him understanding their situation or in the form of physical sustenance. In this sense then, one of the most frequently asked questions about God as Father had to do with why He does not intervene when bad situations happen, why He allows life to be affected and/or lost without providing a solution.

Practice-theoretical foundation concerning the attributes of fathering	
6.5. He is a Living Father	
6.5.1. Biblical and Spiritual foundation:	Work out a teaching on what true riches are and discuss with the child, ensuring that the child gains understanding of God's nature as life-giver, care-giver and sustainer in the child's life.
6.5.1.1. Action step 1:	Take him or her to places of poverty where ministries are busy distributing things such as food and clothes and discuss what brought about the specific conditions and where God is in it and what he or she thinks can be done about it.
6.5.1.2. Action step 2:	Explain through the use of story telling, stories that illustrate how leaning on one's own strength does not achieve an eventual successful life, instead leaning on the Lord's arm brings true blessing.
6.5.2. Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation:	Actively be in touch with the child's physical and emotional needs, equipping where possible and within reason, with the relevant discussion around what is of true importance.
6.5.2.1. Action step 1:	Teach and support the child how to identify someone who is in

need of something physically and be there for another person, even if it is just to take some food to someone regularly.

6.5.2.2. Action step 2: Teach and support the child in showing frequent emotional gestures of goodness and kindness, e.g. comforting a sad or disheartened child or encouraging someone else to play better in his rugby team.

6.5.3. Therapeutic Foundation: Stay in contact with what the child's priorities are and discuss any needs that the child is voicing, whether they be physical, emotional or spiritual.

6.6 He is a Good Father Who Directs, Corrects and Rewards

Scripture consistently reveals God's goodness and kindness (Ps. 103: 1-13; Ex. 34:6). Out of this goodness and kindness, one sees a Father Who is consistently engaged in shaping and teaching His children, through godly instruction and wisdom, as well as discipline and reward (3.4.5.). Prov. 3:12 indicates that He is the Father Who disciplines His true sons, wishing for them to seek wisdom (Prov.1 & 2) and to busy themselves with His plans for their lives, for good and not for destruction. The scriptures further indicate that only the fool does not heed wisdom and instruction, continuing with his own road that leads to destruction.

Out of the investigation into the field of sociology, it became clear that fathers who were not involved in their son's or daughter's upbringing were more likely to encounter children who became mal-adjusted and delinquent (4.2.). Their children were less likely to have and maintain successful and functional relationships and struggled to commit to studies or jobs. They also had mal-adjusted ideas about themselves, others, life and God, struggling to take responsibility for their own behaviors and exhibiting a problem in the areas of teachability and accountability.

In the domain of psychology it was noted that a good father is a blessing, whilst an inadequate father is perhaps worse than having no father at all (4.3.), for the father was likely to duplicate his inadequacies into his son or daughter. Research in the field of psychology also focused on the result of children who were left without fathers who could bring definition into their lives, finding that they were more likely to join gangs, abuse substances and skip school, college or work without adequate reasons (4.3.). Their self-esteem was also far below average and their abilities to process problems and

conflict situations was more likely to be stunted, because of a lack of direction from their fathers.

Lastly, the empirical research results revealed that nearly all the participants were seeking instruction from their fathers about how to live life (5.1.1.). They also acknowledged the importance of their father's interventions in their lives, whether through instruction that led to reward or to discipline (5.1.6). The participants who had absent fathers agreed that one of the components that they missed the most had to do with their father's instructions, stating that their greatest need was for a father who could guide and instruct them (5.1.2.). One element that kept on repeating itself was the need to have fathers whom they could respect and who would in return respect them.

Practice-theoretical foundation concerning the attributes of fathering 6.6. He is a Good Father Who Directs, Corrects and Rewards	
6.6.1. Biblical and Spiritual foundation:	Go to the child's special place and share with him or her about the power of wisdom in Proverbs and teach and discuss what is said about the importance of following instruction. Explain that one is a true son or daughter of God if you allow God's ways and instruction to form you into who God made you to be. Explain the importance of discipline and the consequence of a life without it.
6.6.1.1. Action step 1:	Take the child with for a visit to a juvenile delinquency facility and discuss with the child what he or she observed and why they think this is so.
6.6.1.2. Action step 2:	Explain and discuss a "decision tree" concept, drawing the tree for the child to see with the positive or negative results of each decision and how it will accumulate over time.
6.6.2. Active Mentoring/Relational Foundation:	Look at where the child is in his or her life, e.g. their circumstances, relationships, challenges, vision. Apply the decision tree to important situations in his or her life and discuss the consequences of each decision whilst transferring instruction to the child about how to deal with people, issues and situations.
6.6.2.1. Action step 1:	Blindfold the child and take him or her by the hand and tell the child to listen carefully and follow instructions, whilst walking and directing the child through a garden, stopping to let the child, e.g. touch a flower or the bark of a tree or smell something.

6.6.2.2. Action step 2: When the child makes wrong decisions, stay in the situation with the child, whilst not rescuing the child from the consequences of his or her decision, but enabling the child to bear the consequence through encouraging him or her in it. Show the child how to do it differently and provide an appropriate reward when the child succeeds.

6.6.3. Therapeutic Foundation: Set up and keep appointments with the child to discuss progress and obstacles as well as to transfer knowledge and instruction into the child's life for the needed situations that might still be challenging or stuck. Make sure to give adequate praise in the way in which it means the most to the child.

6.7 Summary

The basis- and meta-theory as well as the empirical research were placed in a hermeneutical interaction to form the practice theoretical model. In this model a foundation was proposed in which each attribute was correlated and triangulated from three points of view, namely the Biblical perspective, the sociological and psychological meta-perspectives and the empirical research findings. Each of these attributes was then discussed and the above foundation was proposed.

The foundation proposes that when fathering a child optimally, a father would need to keep the above attributes in mind, so that He is better able to offer His son or daughter what they would need to grow up into more of the image of the Father. The most crucial foundational insight to be kept in mind by a father, even before he starts his journey into fatherhood, needs to remain that he fathers after the pattern of the one true God and Father, "from Whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name (Eph. 3: 14, 15). It is because of this then, that the Scriptural attributes were utilized as foundation for the triangulation.

6.8 Preliminary Conclusion

In this chapter it was found that the most important attributes of fathering had to do with the five Biblically identified attributes of God as our Father, which according to chapter 3 were:

- He is a Father Who loves, forgives and participates.
- He is a covenantal Father.
- He is an accessible Father.

- He is a living Father Who gives life.
- He is a Father Who directs, corrects and rewards.

The most important attributes that were identified from the empirical research study proposed that, in summary, the participants needed fathers to be affirming and accepting of them whilst being loving fathers. They also reported that it was of significant importance that their fathers be present, close and involved in their lives, with an adequate understanding of their circumstances.

Also of great importance was their need for their fathers to show the appropriate care and support of their sons, whilst teaching and guiding their sons in the way that they should approach and live life. Lastly, they acknowledged that they needed their fathers to encourage, reward and discipline them appropriately, but always with the necessary respect.

A practice-theoretical foundation was proposed in order to apply the results of the research in previous chapters by way of a model which may be used in the counseling and therapeutic approach to fathering.

CHAPTER 7
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: COLLECTIVE INFERENCE OF PRELIMINARY
CONCLUSIONS, FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR FURTHER
RESEARCH

7.1 Introduction

In this study, titled **“The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A pastoral foundation for fathering”**, chapter 2 looked at what the basis theoretical perspectives on Covenant revealed about what covenant itself is, man and God in Covenant, the history of covenant as well as the difference between the Hittite treaties and the Covenant formularies. Chapter 1 was concluded with a chronological study of the Old Testament covenants leading into the New Covenant. In chapter 3, the basis theoretical investigation focused on the attributes of God as Father in the Scriptures. Fathering in the Ancient Patriarchal Tradition was also compared to fathering in contemporary Christianity.

Chapter 4 gave a meta-theoretical perspective on fathering out of the fields of sociology and psychology, with an inclusion of what the relevant research in these fields offered concerning both the positive as well as the negative consequences of adequate as well as inadequate fathering. Chapter 5 presented the empirical research findings of eight participants who gave written descriptions to an open-ended questionnaire concerning their impressions about their own fathers or male role-models, God as their Father and lastly, their impressions concerning who they think they became as a result of the fathering in their lives.

Lastly, in chapter 6, a practice-theoretical foundation on fathering was proposed that could enable fathers to be better equipped to deal with the issue of fathering, whether they need to father young children, adolescents or adult sons or daughters.

In this chapter, a collective inference of preliminary conclusions, final conclusions and suggested topics for further research will be given.

7.2 Chapter Conclusions

Chapter 2 concluded that God is not only a Creator, but also a Father of all that has been created. He is a gracious God who continuously reaches out to mankind to offer restoration of man's relationship with God. He is a Father who longs to embrace those who have fallen away and His invitation for inclusion into the New Covenant is the widest spread invitation to the nations of all the previous covenants in the Old Testament that were known to be more Israel-based.

Chapter 3 showed that God is also our Father. He is the Father of all that have been created and He sets the pattern after which human fathers need to fashion themselves into His image. He gave us access to Him as His children through the Old Testament Covenants that hinted at Him as Israel's Father; and which eventually lead Him to repetitively exhibit Himself in the New Testament as "our Father who is in heaven" after whom we should take (John 14:7) and after whom all families take their names (Eph. 3: 14, 15).

In chapter 4 it was determined that a father indeed plays a pivotal role in a child's formation in life, not only in his physical development, but even more importantly, in the child's psychological and social development. Without a father's active participation the child is not only left without a role-model after whom he can mould his or her own interactions and relationships, he or she will also tend to struggle to define themselves and build on their self-esteem. Perhaps one of the most significant needs that a father fulfills for a child is to help him make sense of his world and to teach him or her how to process reality. It was concluded then that the presence and involvement of a father is pivotal in a child's healthy formation.

In the chapter that looked at the empirical research, namely chapter 5, it was found that the two foundational attributes that were offered as most important in most of the participants' lives were their need to know that they are *acceptable* to their earthly fathers and that their fathers *loved* them. These needs were also extrapolated to God as their Father, and therefore indicated a foundational need whether in their human relationships with father figures or in their relationships with God as Father.

The conclusion arrived at in Chapter 6 found that the most important attributes of fathering had to do with the five Biblically identified attributes of God as our Father, as identified in chapter 3, namely:

- God is a Father Who loves, forgives and participates.
- God is a covenantal Father.
- God is an accessible Father.
- God is a living Father Who gives life.
- God is a Father Who directs, corrects and rewards.

The most important attributes that were identified from the empirical research study proposed that, the participants needed fathers to be affirming and accepting of them whilst being loving fathers. They also reported that it was of significant importance to them that their fathers be present, close and involved in their lives, with an adequate understanding of their circumstances.

Also of great importance was their need for their fathers to show the appropriate care and support of their sons, whilst teaching and guiding their sons in the way that they should approach and live life. Lastly, they acknowledged that they needed their fathers to encourage, reward and discipline them appropriately, but always with the necessary respect.

7.3 Final Conclusion

The central theoretical argument of this study proposed that God reveals Himself through the metaphor of our Father, which is made possible through the Biblical covenants between God and man. The argument also proposed that such revealed attributes can serve as a foundation for human fathers to better understand the important aspects that they need to consider in order to father their own children with greater consistency with the image of their heavenly Father. This study identified what Scripture revealed about the important attributes of God as Father and then delved into what the two relevant meta-theoretical fields of psychology and sociology put forth about the importance of a father who engages with his children in specific ways. From there, the empirical research identified certain recurrent attributes that verified what Scripture and the meta-theory put forth about the important attributes of God as Father, which

correlated with what research found about human fathers. The result was the pastoral foundation for fathering that was proposed in chapter 6.

7.4 Topics for further Research

Seeing that this study was a study that only started the investigation into fathering, it needs to be proposed that the empirical research be broadened out to include participants from the female gender as well as participants from various ethnical groups. Such a broadened empirical study would verify what has been found so far and further enrich the foundation for fathering.

Other related topics that could be researched, would need to include the role of a mother in a child's formation and the necessary interaction between both parents.

Further advances could also be made in age appropriate intervention around fathering and eventually, mothering, so that a pastoral foundation can be more accurately applied to various ages of children and adults in need of fathering and mothering.

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APPENDIX 1

Research Questions re. Fatherhood.

Biographical Information:

1. Name and Surname:
2. Age:
3. Marital Status:
4. Children:
5. Duration of exposure to biological or other father figure (state what type of father figure, e.g. biological father, step-father, adopted father, male in family as father, etc and state duration of exposure to that person.)

About your father...

Complete the open-ended sentences and write at least one paragraph with 5 sentences under each question:

1. When I was a young boy the image that was presented to me about a father was... (and give 2 examples)
2. When I was growing up what I needed most from my/a father was... (and give 2 examples)
3. The thing that I think injured me most about my father and I was... (and tell the story of what happened).
4. The thing that I think helped me most about my father and I was (and tell the story of what happened).
5. My father/primary male role model thought I was (and tell the story of what happened)
6. I thought my father/primary male role model was.... (and motivate why you thought like that)

7. The lowest point in my life was when, and at that point my father reacted by... (tell the story as well as how you remember the reaction of the father figure in your life)
8. The peaks of my life were when, and at those points my father reacted by.... (tell the story as well as how you remember the reaction of the father figure in your life)

About God as Father....:

Complete the open-ended sentences and write at least one paragraph with 5 sentences under each question:

1. I believe that if God existed and was a Father that He is (name a few thoughts about Him).
2. The high points between me and God as my Father were when..... and this made me believe of Him that (when and what you believed)
3. The lowest points between me and God as my Father were when and this made me believe of Him that (when and what you believed)
4. The one thing that bothers me most about God as my Father is... (what and why)
5. The one thing that I wish for the most from God as my Father is... (what and why)
6. What I don't understand about God as my Father is....(what and why)
7. What I would value about Him more than anything else would be ...(what and why)

What I think a father should be:

Write a minimum of half a page about what you think the most important attributes would be for a father to have and why you say so.

Who you think you became:

1. Write a minimum of half a page about who you think you became because of the interaction between you and your earthly or other father or primary male role-model.

2. Write a minimum of half a page about how you think God as Father, at any stage in your life affected your life and brought change in you.

APPENDIX 2

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY ETHICS APPLICATION FORM: INFORMED CONSENT

PART 1: General Project Information

This part below provides you as participant in this study with more information, so that you can make an informed decision about your voluntary participation or not.

1. Title of the Project:

The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A Pastoral Foundation for Fathering.

2. Institution / School / Subject group / Institute:

Faculty of Theology, North West University, School of Church Sciences

3. Names & contact details of study leader:

Title, name & surname: Prof. Dr. George Lotter

Full names: George Adrian

Function in Project: Promoter

Qualifications: B.A.; Th.B; D.Min; Th.D

Professional Registration: -

Telephone (home): 018 297 7634

Telephone (work): 018 299 1840

Cellphone: 083 284 7599

Emergency Number: 083 284 7599

Postal address: P. O. Box 20777, Noordbrug, 2522

4. You are approached to take part in this study and may now have the following questions:

What are the set requirements that persons must meet to be able to take part in the study?

Why and how was I chosen?

All participants are male and must at some point or currently have been or be confessing Christians. The participants were chosen out of a random sampling method.

What is the purpose of this study?

To investigate the important attributes of God as Father as well as human fathers, so as to define a foundation upon which human fathering can be built.

What will be expected of me as participant? In which interventions / procedures will I have to take part? What exactly will it involve?

It will be required of the participant to respond, through the medium of writing to give a written description of a number of open-ended questions about fathers, compiled by

the researcher. This is referred to as the giving of written descriptions in a phenomenological study. The researcher will then interpret/analyse the data and construct a model that will serve as a foundation for fathering.

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What are the potential discomfort and/or potential dangers and/or potential permanent consequences (however negligible) that participation in this project holds?

Not applicable

What precautions have been taken to protect me as participant?

The researcher will do everything possible to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. The name of the participant will not appear anywhere in the study. The records of the written descriptions will be safely kept by the researcher in a fire proof safe for three years.

How long am I expected to be involved in the project (e.g. number and duration of exposures to questions)?

The open-ended questionnaire will be given to the participant. He then has 7 days in which to complete the questionnaire in his own private time. The written responses to the open-ended questions will require between 30 and 45 minutes to complete.

What direct benefits can I expect from the study? What remuneration (monetary or services) can I expect for my participation?

The fact that the participant is asked to think about certain questions, may have an enlightening effect on him, but no remuneration is allowed to be paid to the participant.

What potential general benefits are there for the broader community, which may arise from the study?

The researcher holds the hope that a foundation for human fathering can be constructed through this study, to aid fathers and/or male role models in more successfully fathering their sons.

How will the findings of this study (general results, as well as individual about me as participant) be made available or conveyed to me?

See 4.3

What measures have been taken to handle and store my data confidentially?

See 4.5

What restrictions are there to ensure the confidentiality of data?

See 4.5

If applicable, what is the policy for the handling of results of genetic tests and familial genetic information to ensure its confidentiality?

Not applicable

If applicable, where drugs are tested and if they appear to be effective, will they continue to be made available to me after the study, or will I have to pay for them myself?

Not applicable

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If applicable, how will biological samples that are not used immediately be destroyed, stored or used later?

Not applicable

How will I and other participants or the community share in any future commercial use of the data's profits?

Not applicable

If I suffer any detrimental effects from the study, to what extent is free treatment available and are there sufficient funds to finance the treatment? If any injury, medical disability or death follows from participating in the study, to what extent will I, my dependants and/or next of kin be compensated?

Not applicable

As study leader, I confirm to participants that the above information is complete and correct.

Signature of Project Leader

Date

Signed at

Place of Signature

NWU Etiekaansoekvorm: Ingeligte Toestemming

PART 2: General Principles

To the signatory of the consent contained in Part 3 of this document:

You are invited to take part in the research study as described in Part 1 of this informed consent form. It is important that you also read and understand the following general principles, which are applicable to all participants in our research study:

1. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and no pressure, however subtle, may be placed on you to take part.
2. It is possible that you may not derive any benefit personally from your participation in the study, although the knowledge that may be gained by means of the study may benefit other persons or communities.
3. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without stating reasons, and you will in no way be harmed by so doing. You may also request that your data no longer be used in the study. However, you are kindly requested not to withdraw from the study without careful consideration, since it may have a detrimental effect on, inter alia, the statistical reliability of the project.
4. By agreeing to take part in the study, you are also giving consent for the data that will be generated to be used by the researchers for scientific purposes as they see fit, with the caveat that it will be confidential and that your name will not be linked to any of the data without your consent.
5. You will be given access to your own data upon request, unless the Ethics Committee has approved temporary non-disclosure (in the latter case, the reasons in Part 1 will be explained to you.)
6. A summary of the nature of the study, the potential risks, factors that may cause you possible inconvenience or discomfort, the benefits that can be expected and the known and/or probable permanent consequences that your participation in the study may have for you as participant, are set out for you in Part 1 hereof.

7. You are encouraged to ask the researcher any questions you may have regarding the study and the related procedures at any stage. The researcher will gladly answer your queries and will also discuss the study with you in detail, if that is your need.
8. If you are a minor, the written consent of your parent or legal guardian is required before you participate in this study, as well as (in writing if possible) your voluntary assent to take part – no coercion may be placed on you.
9. The study objectives are always secondary to your well-being and actions taken will always place your interests above those of the study.

NWU Etiekaansoekvorm: Ingeligte Toestemming

PART 3: Consent

Title of the Project:

The Attributes of God the Father in the Covenant: A Pastoral Foundation for Fathering.

I, the undersigned _____

Full names & Surname

have read the preceding premises in connection with the project, as discussed in **Part 1** and **Part 2** of this informed consent form, and have also heard the oral version thereof and I declare that I understand it. I have also initialled every page of **Part 1** and **Part 2**. I was given the opportunity to discuss relevant aspects of the project with the researcher and I hereby declare that I am taking part in the study voluntarily.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signed at _____

Place of Signature

WITNESSES

Signature of Witness 1

Date

Signed at

Place of Signature

Signature of Witness 2

Date

Signed at

Place of Signature

NWU Etiekansoekvorm: Ingeligte Toestemming