

Searching for a parent? Turn to God.

Whether you are a single parent, or simply wish you could express the qualities of both a father and a mother, God can help.

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A LOT has been said lately about the family unit. Questions have been raised about what exactly constitutes a family: Does it have to include a father and a mother? Are children necessary? Can it be extended to include others?

The switching of traditional parental roles, and the frequent lack of two parents in a household, have made many wonder how the next generation—our children or grandchildren—will be able to cope with their own relationships, their own families. Such issues may not have easy answers. But an enlarged spiritual understanding of man's true relationship to God, along with a clearer comprehension of man's true nature, can bring needed solutions to difficult family situations.

If you are a single parent, or if your job demands the expression of qualities typically associated with the opposite sex, you can learn to express more of your completeness by learning more of your relationship to God. You may be deeply concerned about the lack of a mother or father in the household. You may feel that you lack a particular masculine or feminine quality so

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needed by your children. However, *all* spiritual qualities are reflected by man from God. Not one quality can elude its needed expression.

Mary Baker Eddy, as the Founder of the Christian Science Church, had to express many qualities generally thought of as masculine. She was able to do this because of her understanding of God as Father-Mother and of the completeness of man as His image. Her writings speak of God as feminine as well as masculine—as supplier *and* nourisher, as creator *and* maintainer. Mrs. Eddy writes in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*, "Father-Mother is the name for Deity, which indicates His tender relationship to His spiritual creation" (p. 332). It is this tender relationship and man's spiritual completeness as God's image that we can naturally come to feel and express.

God made man whole, lacking nothing. He created man "male and female," according to Genesis (1:27), and expresses Himself through both masculine and feminine qualities. If you're lacking a father in your household, you can pray to understand that you can express masculine qualities naturally to benefit everyone in the home. Support, strength, courage, stability, are spiritual qualities based in God and reflected by man. If you're lacking a mother in your home, you can pray to understand the feminine qualities that constitute the ever-present motherhood of God. Love, spiritual nourishment, peace, and forgiveness can all be brought to light through a diviner sense of motherhood—and how it is expressed by God's idea, man.

Gender does not limit us in expressing the completeness of qualities given to man by God. And because man is truly spiritual, he is uninhibited by material circumstances. Indeed, our circumstances are subject to our prayers; if there seems to be a lack in our experience, it can be filled through a better understanding of real supply, the innumerable right ideas which come directly from God.

Christ Jesus saw God as his eternal Father, forever present and available to help. He felt so close to God that he called

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spiritually understanding man's completeness and oneness with God, Spirit.

I have a friend who has had to raise her daughter alone. It's been challenging for her, as it is for many single parents, to be both mother and father of the household. But she once confided that it was particularly challenging when it came to discipline. This was one job she wished she didn't have.

One evening when she and her daughter were out, her daughter became very unruly. My friend was angry and on the way home could hardly speak to her daughter. But she prayed and saw that she actually did include the spiritual strength, guidance, and patience she felt she was lacking. She prayed to express these qualities in her home and with her daughter. And she prayed to provide for her daughter an understanding of integrity and order—without reacting to unruliness.

It was fairly quiet all the way home. Once they arrived, they

took a few minutes to pray together quietly. It came to my friend how to discipline her daughter and how to teach her to express Principle at the same time. That night was a turning point for both of them. My friend says her daughter's behavior has improved and they rarely have difficulties.

My friend's expression of what are often considered "masculine qualities"—strength, courage, and wisdom—healed the situation. She realized more of her spiritual completeness and learned how to express it more fully in her home.

Man's true Father-Mother is God. No one can lack God's parentage. No one can be without God's guidance, love, care, and protection. In reality, we can never lack the needed qualities of fatherhood or motherhood, because God is All-in-all to man. Like my friend, we can find these qualities within us and learn to express them more in our daily lives.

