



Sunday October 14, 2018
Spiritual Fathers and Mothers

1 John 2:12-14

12 I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

13 I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father.

14 I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

While we do not know exactly from where and to whom the First Epistle of John was written, it is very likely, that this was written when John was exiled on the island of Patmos, and to the churches in Ephesus and Asia Minor. We do not see it addressed specifically to one local church, and hence, it is likely an epistle intended to be circulated and read across several local churches.

We see that as John is addressing believers he addresses three groups "little children" (or infants), "young men" (or youth) and "fathers". This grouping or category seems to be based on their stage of spiritual growth.

We see similar references to stages of spiritual growth, in other places in Scripture:

"As new born infants...." (1 Peter 2:2)

"..spiritualbabes in Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:1)

"... children mature. " (1 Corinthians 14:20)

"..to a perfect (mature) man...no longer be children,..." (Ephesians 4:13-14)

"....babe....full age..." (Hebrews 5:13-14)

It is obvious that God does not want any of us to remain as children. We are to grow up spiritually. Eventually all of us are to grow up to become fathers and mothers.

Generally, "fathers and mothers" are those who "reproduce" spiritually. That is they give birth to children in the faith, by bringing people into the Kingdom of God. We see Paul use the term "fathers" in this context:

1 Corinthians 4:15

For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

Here Paul is referring to the fact that he has brought the Corinthians to faith in Jesus Christ, and hence has birthed them spiritually through the Gospel.



Paul also calls others like Timothy and Titus as sons in the faith. In essence, he is referring to himself as their spiritual father.

Definition of a Spiritual father or Mother

So in the Biblical context of spiritual life and growth, we can define the role of a spiritual father or mother as :

*one who nurtures another from infancy to adulthood, or
one who nurtures another from a place of immaturity to maturity, or
one who nurtures another from one level in God to higher levels in God.*

Essentially it has to do with nurturing, enriching and empowering another person spiritually.

In modern day Christian context we may use synonyms such as : spiritual mentor, pastor, shepherd, and other related terms.

Being a True Spiritual Father or Mother

What are some of the characteristics of a true spiritual father or mother?

We draw a few insights from the apostle Paul, on his relationship with the Corinthians as well as with Timothy and Titus whom he referred to as his children/sons in the faith.

#1) Nurture by Word, Spirit and life

2 Timothy 3:10-11

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance,

11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.

Paul took a young disciple Timothy and nurtured him into a man of God.

He nurtured him by allowing Timothy to carefully follow, that is see from proximity, have a close view of his:

"doctrine" that is teaching,

"manner of life" that is life example,

"purpose" showing how he pursued God's assignment on his life

"faith" in God, in and through difficult times

"longsuffering" and "perseverance"

"love" for God and people

So there was a nurturing of others through the Word, through the Holy Spirit and through Life example.



#2) Nurture with love and discipline

When we observe Paul how he worked with the Corinthian church (whom he called as his children) and other churches, we see him expressing both spiritual affection, and also bringing discipline.

1 Corinthians 4:21

What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

#3) Deal with difficult issues

Spiritual fathers and mothers address difficult issues, with love and gentleness, to help sons and daughters overcome them. These would include:

- ✓ character weaknesses
- ✓ recurring problems (losing jobs, getting into debt, etc.)
- ✓ unresolved emotional issues

Most people tend to hide behind their gift. So we need to go beyond just discussing 'gifting and calling' and also discuss life issues.

#4) Develop you into your calling

The purpose of spiritual nurture is to help others reach their full potential in God. So they encourage you in your specific calling, gifting and assignments.

#5) Release you at the right time

They do not hold on to you beyond the God-appointed season. They know that an eagle is meant to fly and not be locked up in a cage.

#6) Celebrate your successes and rejoice when you outdo them

They celebrate all that God does through you. They rejoice when you do better than them.

WHAT THEY WILL NOT DO...

#1) Will not violate divine order

A true spiritual father or mother will follow divine order and will not violate other God ordained authority structures, especially that of the family

God has ordained authority structured for various aspects in life:

family (husband head of the household)

local church (the pastor)



workplace (leaders/managers)
government

Spiritual fathers and mothers will not override such authority structures.

For example:

A true spiritual father and mother will not lead a husband to neglect his role in the family, OR, will not lead a wife to rebel against the authority of her husband, etc.

This is also true, if/when you are nurturing someone who is attending a different local church.

As a true spiritual father or mother, you always encourage them to submit to the leadership of the local church they belong to and honor the pastor of the church they belong to.

#2) Will not control or manipulate

True spiritual fathers and mothers will not "use" (through control and manipulations) their sons or daughters for their own personal gain.

2 Corinthians 12:17-19

17 Did I take advantage of you by any of those whom I sent to you?

18 I urged Titus, and sent our brother with him. Did Titus take advantage of you? Did we not walk in the same spirit? Did we not walk in the same steps?

19 Again, do you think that we excuse ourselves to you? We speak before God in Christ. But we do all things, beloved, for your edification.

vs 17 "...take advantage..." means "make a gain out of, defraud".

They keep the best interests of their sons and daughters at heart as they engage. "...we do all things, beloved, for your edification" (vs 19).

Spiritual control and manipulation is actually a form of witchcraft and is often demonically empowered.

When false brethren had come in among the believers in Galatia (Galatians 2:5) and tried to bring them under the control of their teaching (of keeping the law), the apostle Paul used strong words :

Galatians 3:1 "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth,..."

"bewitched" means "...to mislead by pretences, as if by magic arts; to fascinate; to influence by a charm.." (Albert Barnes) and has the idea of control through witchcraft or black magic.

He tells them to **"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."** (Galatians 5:1)



Paul lets them know that such being "bewitched" and under "a yoke of bondage" is not of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 5:7-8

7 You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

8 This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you.

While there is nothing wrong in using terms like "my son", "my daughter" when addressing others you are nurturing, sometimes people use the terms "my son", "my daughter" as a way to control, manipulate and expect special treatment. If this is the intent, then it is wrong.

#3) Will not abuse spiritual authority

True spiritual fathers and mothers will not misuse the spiritual access and authority they have over you.

They do not control your choices or decisions.

They do not exploit you for personal gain (e.g. money, favors, privileges, special treatment, etc.)

2 Corinthians 1:24

Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.

They use their spiritual authority for your edification and to see your growth and advancement.

2 Corinthians 13:10

Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me for edification and not for destruction.

#4) Will not attack you or pull you down if you go beyond them

An interesting example is that of Saul and David.

Saul felt insecure. He became jealous of David, when he heard the people sing "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands". Out of jealousy, Saul tried to destroy David.

#5) Will not prevent you from receiving from other true ministers of God

Paul permitted the Corinthian church to receive from the ministry of Apollos, as well as other members of his team.

They recognize and honor the fact that no one minister of God has it all. God has put many ministers in the Body of Christ to serve the Body and we need to receive from as many as we can to grow together into maturity.



Errors in Church History

A truth that we see in Scripture, if not properly applied (if misapplied) can cause damage.

Church history reveals times when truth about spiritual fathers and mothers was misapplied and caused much harm.

The shepherding movement of the 1970s-1980s

One such example was the shepherding movement of the 1980s. Because of the teaching that went out everyone wanted to have a "pastor" over them as a "spiritual covering" and submit to them. **Hebrews 13:17** does not mean that we should give blind, implicit obedience and put ourselves in a place of being controlled, manipulated and abused by those who watch over our souls. However, this is what was taught/expected under the shepherding movement - and it resulted in a lot of individuals and churches being hurt by leaders.

We must learn from the mistakes made in the past.

The Church has a tendency to 'rehash' past teaching using new language. Same erroneous teachings are presented under new packages, leading us into repeating mistakes that should actually be avoided.

Misconceptions, Misapplication and Abuses

Here are a few errors that were/are being taught leading to misapplication and abuse of the truth concerning spiritual fathers and mothers.

Error #1 : If you don't have a spiritual father/mother you have an orphan spirit

Correct Understanding: As born again people we are sons and daughters of God, adopted into God's family and God is our Father (John 1:12-13). We have the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:14-16).

Error #2 : You must be connected to a spiritual father or mother to receive from God

Correct Understanding: Jesus is the Vine and each of us are branches connected to the Vine. We do not need an intermediary to connect with God. We are "in Christ Jesus" and God has brought each of us into union with Christ. We are all joined together with the Lord and have become one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17).

Error #3 : Your spiritual lineage is important, just like your biological lineage



Correct Understanding: We all have one spiritual lineage. Jesus Christ is the firstborn among many brethren. In Christ we are Abrahams seed and heirs according to the promise. This is all that matters.

Error #4: You cannot go beyond the level of your spiritual father or mother

Correct Understanding: You can go as far in God as you desire to and are willing to press into. No one can stop you. If you seek Him, you will find Him. No one can stop that or change that.

Error #5: You operate under the anointing of your spiritual father or mother

Correct Understanding: Our anointing comes from God and each one operates with the grace, gift, anointing and assignment God has placed on their lives.

John 3:27 teaches us that "**A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.**" Everything we have ultimately comes from God alone.

Spiritual fathers and mothers can impart and train us, but ultimately, we must receive from God.

2 Corinthians 1:21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God,

There is only one Anointing. He is the Holy Spirit and we operate under His presence and power over our lives. We understand that the Holy Spirit empowers us in different ways - and we refer to this as different kinds of anointings. But this is still the same Person, the Holy Spirit, empowering us. So there is only one Source of the Anointing. This is the Person of the Holy Spirit Himself. His presence and power on us is the anointing. We operate under His presence and power alone. (We will cover more details about impartation on Sunday Oct 28).

Error #6 : If you don't have a spiritual covering or spiritual authority figure over you, you are vulnerable to the devil

Correct Understanding: All believers need to stay in God and are promised that the evil one cannot touch them (1 John 5:18; Luke 10:19). It is true that we must honor spiritual authority structures (wife toward her husband, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, etc.) that are in our lives. Doing so keeps us in obedience to God and hence in God and thus we walk under the protection that come from Him.

Breaking Free from Abusive Spiritual Fathers & Mothers

If you are in a spiritual mentoring/nurturing relationship that is abusive and has any of the negative influences we have discussed earlier, it is important that you politely move out from being under such a relationship.



Usually when you indicate that you would like to discontinue such relationship there would be threats and warnings of evil happening to you. But do not fear. The Lord is your defense. Be bold and confident that nothing evil will happen to you.

Your Response

#1) Rise up to be a true spiritual father and mother to others

#2) Honor true spiritual fathers and mothers

#3) Maintain this truth of spiritual fathers and mothers in its right place do not neglect it, do not exaggerate it. Remember, ultimately, you have to make your own personal journey with God. God is a personal God and He is your heavenly Father and desires for you to grow in your personal relationship with Him. The best spiritual father or mother cannot do for you what you need to do for yourself.

Honoring Spiritual Fathers and Mothers

#1) We follow their godly example

We follow their example as long as they follow Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

#2) We never speak ill of them, not even of their failures and mistakes

There are no perfect fathers and mothers. Our spiritual fathers and mothers will make mistakes, have their faults, areas where God is still working on them.

While we recognize and learn from their mistakes and weaknesses - our goal is not to speak of them to destroy them.

We do not condone their sin and wrong doing, if any. But we do not need to magnify their errors, but out of honor, we learn to be gracious and forgiving for their faults, remembering the many ways they have blessed our lives.

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.

#3) We draw inspiration from their lives, receive revelation and impartation

True sons and daughters receive the spiritual inheritance from their fathers and mothers.

spiritual inheritance = aspects of the grace, gifts and mantles that have been released.



This is God's design, that the anointing and revelations He imparts to one generation be passed on to the next.

Isaiah 59:21

"As for Me," says the LORD, "this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your descendants' descendants," says the LORD, "from this time and forevermore."

#4) We always remain grateful

Always remember and be thankful to God for the lives they have lived and for their labors.

#5) We honor them but we do not worship them

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

**12 And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you,
13 and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.**

1 Timothy 5:17

Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

While we honor spiritual fathers, in some cultures, honor often borders on worship. Things like falling at their feet, elevating them to a place just next to God, worship of their pictures/images, etc. These must be avoided. Remember that they are ordinary men and women used in an extra-ordinary manner by God.

You don't have to go around telling people, so and so is my "spiritual father". While there is nothing wrong in acknowledging what someone has done for you - often the motive behind such statements is questionable - to leverage someone else's name, etc.

MINISTRY TIME
SALVATION CALL



LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Sunday October 14, 2018
Spiritual Fathers and Mothers

This is a simple guide for use in Life Group discussions. Our objective is to focus on the application of the Sunday sermon - how each one is becoming a doer of the Word and building their life on God's Holy Word. The Life Group meeting would normally last for 2 hours. Each Life Group would have up to 12-15 people.

Preparation

To prepare for the Life Group meeting, you can listen to the Sermon Key Points (sermon summary in five minutes) or the full length Sunday sermon. You can also review the Sunday Sermon notes. All these are available in the "All Peoples Church Bangalore" mobile App or online at apcwo.org/sermons. Pray for the Life Group meeting and invite the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

The Life Group meeting may commence with a time of prayer, worship and a fun activity.

LISTEN to God's Word

Read the following Scripture passages: *2 Timothy 3:10-11*

INVESTIGATE God's Word Together

Please discuss a few of these together, giving time for people to share their insights. We encourage each one individually to make notes of their personal learning during the Group discussion.

1) One or two of you can take time to review some of the main points covered in this sermon on "Spiritual fathers and mothers"

2) Each one shares one or two key learning and one or two ways they will apply insights gained from this sermon on "spiritual fathers and mothers".

Encourage each one to participate and share.

FELLOWSHIP by sharing your life and spiritual journey

Each one takes a few (3 minutes max) to share anything from their walk with God, something God has been teaching them, a testimony of answered prayer or a specific challenge that they would like prayer for. Encourage each one to participate and share.



ENCOURAGE each other by praying and ministering to one another

Get into small groups of two or three and take turns to thank God and pray for each other in the light of what was learnt today. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Expect the gifts of the Holy Spirit to flow bringing healing, releasing miracles, prophecy, etc.

Regroup and pray together for:

1, families to be protected and strengthened

2, a mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit on us as a church and through us to bless many others in our city and nation. Nothing but a mighty work of God's Spirit can change our city and nation.

3, for the BUILD TO IMPACT project - for God's hand to guide us through the land search and acquisition process, and for finances to be more than enough to get this project done.

Close by thanking God together.