

# THE CRY FOR **SPIRITUAL FATHERS AND MOTHERS**

PARTICIPANT MANUAL



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The Cry for Spiritual Fathers and Mothers Participant Manual  
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# PREFACE

**T**here is a cry ringing out for spiritual fathers and mothers today! The Lord wants to raise up spiritual parents who are willing to nurture spiritual children and help them grow up in their Christian lives. This is a fulfillment of the Lord's promise in the last days to "turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers... (Malachi 4:6). People are longing for spiritual family relationships that are connected, fulfilling and real. They want someone they can sit down with and talk to, someone with whom they can be entirely open and honest concerning the questions they have and the problems they face. *The Cry for Spiritual Fathering and Mothering Participant Manual* tells how every believer can be developed for ministry. It is about restoring family connections with the challenge for believers to both have and become spiritual parents.

This participant manual is designed to be used alongside a *Spiritual Fathering and Mothering Seminar*, or to accompany a video or audio that covers much of the material from the book *The Cry for Spiritual Fathers and Mothers*.

**Seminar use:** If you attend a live seminar, this manual will help you to follow along each session easily and take extra notes.

**Video or audio for individuals or groups:** Each of the six video or audio sessions contains a presentation by Larry Kreider. Every session has two parts which may be broken out for a total of twelve sessions. Questions at the end of sessions are excellent for small group discussion and interaction.

Larry Kreider

# NOTES

# The Restoration of Spiritual Fathering and Mothering

## PART ONE

### Malachi 4:5-6

*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.*

### **We live in a fatherless/motherless generation**

- There is a curse of fatherlessness, both naturally and spiritually.
- A businessman starts a ministry for parenting because he sees a deficit.
- A young evangelist reveals that he needs a spiritual father.
- An older pastor laments that his spiritual sons do not honor him.

### **Who needs spiritual parents?**

- new believers
- older Christians
- pastors
- **We all need spiritual fathers and mothers, and we all need to become spiritual parents.**

### **People need anchoring**

- There is a growing trend in today's society to reclaim spiritual roots and family.
- The church should provide these relationships.

## NOTES

### **God will turn the hearts of fathers/mothers to the children**

God's intention: raise up spiritual parents who are willing to nurture spiritual children and help them grow up spiritually.

### **Story of Elijah and Elisha in I Kings 19**

- God believed in Elijah when he was in a deep depression.
- **“Go find a son”** Elijah was encouraged to train a son (Elisha) to be his successor.
- **Mantle is passed on to Elisha** Elisha asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and gets it.
- **“My father”** The last words Elisha says to Elijah are “my father, my father.” Elijah was a true father to his spiritual son, Elisha.

**God desires to restore harmony among fathers and their children,** both naturally and spiritually, so fathers can freely impart their inheritance to the next generation.

### **“You do not have many fathers”**

**I Corinthians 4:14-17** *I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me. For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*

### **Paul modeled spiritual fathering**

- “Imitate me”
- Verse 17, Paul sends his “son” Timothy to the Corinthian church.
- Timothy imparts *his* spiritual fatherhood to the Corinthian church.

### **God's will for us is**

- to become a spiritual parent to others
- to give us spiritual parents



**Spiritual parents help us find our identity in Christ**

- We need help to grow up.
- Natural infants cannot thrive if left on their own.

**Paul chides the Corinthian church**

- They were deficient of true spiritual fathers to model fatherhood.
- The church can become a system that produces programs and teachers, rather than sons and daughters.

**Let's not lose the harvest**

- We are on the verge of a great end-time harvest—we must prepare for souls coming into the kingdom of God (Matthew 9:37-38).
- A huge harvest for which the church was not prepared was in the 1960's-1970's—the Jesus People Movement. Many new believers fell by the wayside.

**Our God is a God of family**

- He is reclaiming spiritual family connections.
- **II Corinthians 6:18** *I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.*

**Many in today's generation have a warped understanding of fatherhood**

- Fathers have often abused their authority or have been absent.
- God's people must start to model an example of God's intention for *family*.

**A spiritual father is like a natural father**

- Fathers bring strength, stability and balance.
- A natural father is meant to be a protector, counselor, and guide to his children.
- If they lack a healthy father role model, children find it difficult to achieve their destiny.

## NOTES

### **The curse of fatherlessness**

- Statistics show an alarming trend toward the deterioration of the family.
- **Absentee dads:** The family unit has been torn apart leaving the children unprotected and drifting (both in the home and in the church).

### **Restoring a sense of responsibility**

Jesus came to restore broken relationships:

- relationship between God and man
- relationship between fathers and sons

### **The promise to connect fathers to children**

- **Psalm 68:6** *God sets the lonely in families...*
- **God is restoring “family” to His church.** All functional families need parents.
- **God wants to repair the damage** and reconnect dads and moms to their lonely children.
- **Examples and models of spiritual parenting:** Jesus to twelve disciples, Paul to Timothy, Elijah to Elisha, Moses to Joshua.

## PART ONE Questions

1. Tell us a little about yourself.  
Where are you from originally?
2. When and how did God become real to you?

## PART TWO

## NOTES

### Family connection in the Old and New Testaments

- **In the Old Testament**, God's people consisted of twelve tribes and a multitude of clans and families.
- **In the New Testament**, the Lord continued to see His church as believers in spiritual families. People gathered at the temple and met in small home groups to minister to each other (Acts 2:46-47).

### Relationships are the key

- Relationships were the key to the kingdom of God in the early church.
- House fellowship groups were spiritual families.
- Today, there is a growing dissatisfaction with simply attending church meetings and activities. People are looking for genuine relationships.

### Four things young people are looking for:

- relationships
- authentic Christianity, people being real
- the freedom to be creative
- intergenerational connection

### How do spiritual children become spiritual parents?

**I John 2:12-14** *I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 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 evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

## NOTES

### **Little children, young men, and fathers**

- These stages have nothing to do with chronological age, but how we progress to spiritual maturity.
- Children are expected to grow up. Only then can they become fathers and mothers.

### **Spiritual children know their sins are forgiven**

- Forgiveness of sin places them in fellowship with God and with other believers.
- A believer who has not grown up spiritually may be 50 years of age chronologically, but he or she has not matured into the next stages of Christian growth.

### **Spiritual young men and women know how to overcome the enemy**

- They have learned to feed on the Word to be victorious.
- They have attained a certain level of spiritual maturity, but are not yet spiritual parents.
- Sometimes they are arrogant and dogmatic. They need to be tempered by parenthood.

### **How to become spiritual fathers and mothers: have children!**

- By natural birth (fathering someone you have personally led to Christ)
- By adoption (fathering someone who is already a believer but needs to be mentored)

### **You are called to be a father or mother, regardless of your age**

- The catalyst to maturity as a Christian is to become a spiritual parent.
- Even if you do not feel ready, take a step of faith, and draw on the help and advice of spiritual moms and dads the Lord will place in your life.

**Reproduce others**

- **II Timothy 2:2** *And the things you [second generation] have heard me [first generation] say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men [third generation] who also will be qualified to teach others [fourth generation].*
- Paul, the apostle, was thinking in terms of four generations.

**God promises fatherhood to Abraham**

- **Genesis 17:4** *As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.*
- Abraham was 99-years old and had no children when God gave him the promise that he would be the “father of many nations.”
- **Genesis 15:6a** *Abram believed the Lord...*

**What about me, today?**

- **Galatians 3:29** *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- Our inheritance will be the spiritual children we can some day present to Jesus Christ.
- **I Thessalonians 2:7-8,11-12,19-20** *But we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.*

*For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.*

*For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.*

**What will our reward be when we stand before the Lord?**

Our reward is our inheritance of spiritual children. They are our spiritual posterity.

## NOTES

### Restoring the New Testament pattern of spiritual fathers/mothers

- Jesus wants to restore the New Testament pattern of family life.
- He ministered to the multitudes, but focused on a few.

### New wine for new wineskins

- New Christians need new structures in which to grow.
- **Luke 5:37-38** *And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.*
- New spiritual families are new wineskins.

### People are thirsting for new wine and for new wineskins

- The purpose of a small group is to develop and produce mature Christians who become spiritual parents themselves.

### Spiritual parenting is for everyone!

Jesus worked in his father's carpentry shop until the *time appointed* by the heavenly Father. Although there is a timing of God for fathering and mothering, if you've been a Christian for longer than a few months, the time for becoming a parent may be sooner than you think!

## PART TWO Questions

1. Do you consider yourself a spiritual child, a spiritual young man or woman, or a spiritual parent? Why?
2. Which spiritual truth from this session in spiritual parenting stands out to you?

# Hindrances to Spiritual Parenting

## PART ONE

### **Many Christians are not living according to the manufacturer's instructions**

The church today is filled with people who want to be spiritual parents, but hurts from the past, sin, insecurities or dysfunctional role models stunt them spiritually, preventing them from reaching out to others.

### **Some of the schemes from the enemy that can hinder us from experiencing the blessing of healthy spiritual family relationships:**

#### **Not believing the past can be redeemed and restored**

- **Romans 8:28** *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*
- **Galatians 3:13** says **Jesus is a great redeemer.** We must trust the Lord to take what went wrong in our lives and turn it around. Jesus' genealogy includes Rahab. Her salvation is evidence that God redeems future generations.

#### **Not passing on what God has given us because others have not passed on to us what they have received**

- There are many dysfunctional spiritual parents in the body of Christ.
- Dysfunctional parents use their children to fulfill their own vision instead of releasing their children to do what God has called them to do.

## NOTES

### Feeling we must wait until our needs are met

- By sowing into others' lives, we are promised to reap a return.
- **Ecclesiastes 11:1** *Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.*

### Ignorance

- Many have never heard of spiritual parenting or do not understand it.
- Ignorance is a curse because it robs us of our inheritance!

### Apathy

- When people are wrapped up in their own selfish desires, they become apathetic to the things of God.
- Revelation 3:19 *I continually discipline and punish everyone I love; so I must punish you, unless you turn from your indifference and become enthusiastic about the things of God (TLB).*

### Insecurity

- “I do not know how to be a spiritual parent. I’m afraid. I don’t know the Bible well enough. I need to get my life more together.”
- Insecurities paralyze us; we never move beyond our comfort zone.

### A lack of modeling

Perhaps we never had a parent to guide us—natural or spiritual, so we wait on the sidelines because we have no idea how to parent.

### Impatience

- Impatience will cause us to quit when we don’t see quick results. This is contrary to the scriptural principle of sowing and reaping.
- “God is not working toward a particular finish—His purpose is the process itself”—Oswald Chambers
- **Three stages to every vision:** The honeymoon stage, the testing stage, the fruitfulness stage.



**Fear of our mistakes**

- After wrestling with the Lord, Jacob walked with a limp.
- Hardships and mistakes make us stronger if we learn from them.

**Hurts from the past**

- Taking initiative requires taking risks.
- Spiritual sons and daughters will not always like what we have to say.
- Look beyond the superficial symptoms and be willing to take the risk to challenge your spiritual son or daughter to face the problems he or she is experiencing.

**Abuse of authority**

Spiritual fathers and mothers cannot be dominating authority figures that coerce their children into submission. They must be servants who point their spiritual children to Jesus. A level of trust must be built.

**Dominating Fathers**<sup>1</sup>

1. Function as if they are the source of guidance for people's lives.
2. Emphasize the rights of leaders.
3. Set leaders apart and give them special privileges.
4. Seek to control people's actions.
5. Emphasize the importance of the leaders ministering to others.
6. Use rules and laws to control people and force them to conform to a mold.

**Fathers in the Lord**<sup>1</sup>

1. Believe that God is the source of guidance and desire to help other Christians learn to hear His voice.
2. Emphasize the responsibilities of leaders.
3. Emphasize the body of Christ serving one another.
4. Encourage people to be dependent on God.
5. Emphasize the importance of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.
6. Provide an atmosphere of trust and grace to encourage growth.

## NOTES

### “Burned stones” in the body of Christ

- **Nehemiah 4:2** ...*What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall?...Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?*
- The enemies of God’s people ridiculed Nehemiah for trying to rebuild the broken wall around Jerusalem.
- **I Peter 2:5** *You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*
- When we come to Christ, we are stones that have come alive spiritually. We once were dead but now we are living stones being built together into a living house of relationships.

### Sometimes Christians get “burned” or discouraged

- The devil is throwing accusations at God’s people today:  
“How do you think you can function with all the baggage you carry around from that broken relationship?” or “You’ve made too many mistakes, how do you expect to help someone else?”
- **God wants to place discouraged fathers and mothers back on His wall of service.**

### Believe God, not the lies of the enemy

- We will feel unable to fulfill the Lord’s call on our lives if we believe the lies of the enemy.
- The burned stones were charred and looked useless, but God’s people chose not to look at the dismal circumstances.

### Some of God’s people feel “dropped”

- Mephibosheth believed a lie (II Samuel 9).
- So many people, with a clear call of God on their lives, feel they have been burned emotionally or “dropped” by someone they trusted. They often live in deep disappointment and fear that the Lord will never use them again.

**What if you were “burned or dropped”?**

- **God is a restorer.** Regardless of what you have been through, God wants to restore you.
- **II Timothy 4:7** *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* Near the end of his life, Paul was in prison and most of his co-workers had left him. Even so, Paul shows no regrets. He knew that however dismal the circumstances looked, He could trust God.

**PART ONE Questions**

1. What positive impact has spiritual parenting had on your life?
2. What are some areas of discouragement you have experienced in the area of spiritual parenting?

**PART TWO****What should we do if we have been falsely accused or hurt by others? Sometimes we must choose to drink the cup**

- **Numbers 5:11-20** We should not try to vindicate ourselves when others accuse us falsely.
- **Mercy triumphs over judgment—James 2:13b**  
*...Mercy triumphs over judgment! We must extend mercy to each other and leave the judgment to God. Do not judge, and you will not be judged* (Luke 6:37).

## NOTES

### Take steps to be restored!

- **Galatians 3:13a; I John 3:8b** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*
- We are free from the devil's lies over our lives because we are free from the curse. We can reclaim what Satan stole from us.

### 1. Faith unlocks the door

- Confess the truth of God's Word (Romans 10:17), and faith is built.
- Spiritual fathers and mothers impart spiritual truth to their sons and daughters by God's Word.

### 2. Stake your claim

- **Joshua 1:2-3** God promised the children of Israel the fertile land of Canaan. It was legally their land because God promised it to them.
- They had to receive it by going in, taking it from their enemies, and staking the claim for themselves.

### 3. Receive prayer from a trusted friend

- **James 5:16** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.*
- Seek the counsel of a godly friend so he or she can assist you on how to obtain God's forgiveness, receive healing in your emotions, and gain the strength to sin no more.

### 4. Be patient

- The process may not happen overnight.
- **Hebrews 6:12b** *...imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.*

## 5. Keep your branches growing over the wall

- **Genesis 49:22** Joseph, a man of moral and spiritual strength, was likened to a young fruit tree with its branches going over the well wall.
- Your branches will grow abundantly over the wall too if you are constantly watered by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

### You will be stronger!

- God is calling forth His people who have been burned and broken; He is healing them and giving them a job to do.
- God loves to use burned stones!

### Remember, you can't give what you don't have (the example of John)

- Spiritual fathers and mothers must be secure in the Father's love.
- The example of John: John was assured of Jesus' love.
- **John 15:9a** *As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.*

### Spiritual fathers and mothers will be secure whether or not other people affirm them

Your significance comes from His love for you, and from His love for you alone.

### Spiritual fathers and mothers are secure and forgiven (the example of Mark)

- A combination of a growing intimacy with the Father, a praying mother, and the nurturing aspect of spiritual fathers in Mark's life caused him to grow up spiritually and become secure and useful in the Lord's service.
- **Acts 12:12** His mother's home was used for prayer.
- **I Peter 5:13** Peter calls Mark his "son."

## NOTES

### **Strive for a healed relationship with your natural father**

- Family counselors' offices are filled with people struggling with what happened in their relationships with their parents.
- Spiritual fathers and mothers should attempt to mend a broken relationship with their natural parents.

### **Spiritual fathers and mothers must be secure to give love away**

We are not spiritual fathers and mothers for what it does for us, we are spiritual fathers and mothers out of obedience to the Lord. He loves us perfectly.

### **Ask yourself these three questions:**

1. Are you a burned stone?
2. Have you felt dropped?
3. Do you know you are really, really loved by your heavenly Father?

**Luke 15:20** The prodigal son: when you take a step toward your heavenly Father, He runs toward you!

## PART TWO Questions

1. What do you sense the Holy Spirit is saying to you right now that would hinder you from becoming a spiritual parent?
2. Could we pray with you about what the Lord is showing you?

<sup>1</sup> Floyd McClung, *The Father Heart of God*, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1985), pp. 129-131.

# What Does a Spiritual Father or Mother Look Like?

## PART ONE

### An example of a spiritual father

- **Philippians 2:19-22** *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because **as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.***
- Timothy was a spiritual son to Paul. He had served with Paul and proved himself as a servant-leader.

### A spiritual father defined:

- **A spiritual father/mother helps a spiritual son/daughter reach his/her God-given potential.**
- Being a spiritual father or mother is **not a title or position**; it is a role of servanthood (Matthew 23:9,11). A spiritual father or mother is always a servant first.
- Spiritual fathers and mothers are **mentors or coaches**. They are in a place to help sons and daughters negotiate the obstacles of their spiritual journeys.

### There are similarities between a spiritual and natural father<sup>1</sup>

Spiritual fathering is taught and imparted just as natural fathering.  
For example:

## NOTES

### 1. Fathers demonstrate love

- Without love, a son may grow, but he cannot flourish.
- Fathers affirm their children and provide the gentle security of an unwavering commitment to their well-being.

### 2. Fathers train and discipline

Fathers take a powerful part in firmly directing and guiding their children into activities and attitudes that will prepare them for success.

### 3. Fathers provide

To “provide” means *to sustain and enrich*.

### 4. Fathers reproduce

Natural fathers are men who have physically contributed to creating a new life. Spiritual fathers give spiritual life to new children in the faith by becoming the vessels through which those children enter into the new birth.

### 5. Fathers bless and impart

- A father will experience the joys of fathering when he takes what he has and imparts it to others. *To impart means to give to another what one is/has.*
- **Romans 1:11-12** *I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.*
- Many fathers understand how to love, provide for and train their children, but many lack the ability to impart spiritual blessing.
- **Ephesians 1:3** The apostle Paul pictures God the Father blessing us as children with “every spiritual blessing” through our relationship with Christ.



## 6. Spiritual fathers have “been with Jesus”

- **Acts 4:13** *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*
- Spiritual fathers/mothers do not have to be spiritual giants in order to train others. The important thing is that we “have been with Jesus.”

## 7. Fathers are models and examples

- Jesus modeled spiritual fathering. Though He ministered to the multitudes, He spent most of His time as a spiritual father to twelve men.
- **Hebrews 13:7** *Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith.*
- Paul spoke into the lives of those he fathered in the faith. He presented a godly example to those he served, and they gladly imitated him.

## 8. Fathers give sons a sense of significance

- A goal of a father/mother is to build a healthy sense of self-worth in his son/daughter.
- Leaders often become leaders only when someone believes in them as leaders. Parents must see their children in the light of who they can become.

## 9. Fathers see the potential in their spiritual sons and daughters

- Recognizing the undeveloped traits of a son or daughter is a father and mother’s responsibility.
- **Proverbs 22:6** *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*
- Spiritual parents can help sons and daughter set goals and learn how to develop their gifts according to their “bent.”

## NOTES

### 10. Fathers are available

A spiritual father or mother is an unselfish individual. Spiritual fathers and mothers give of their time generously and sacrificially.

### PART ONE Questions

1. Thus far, what has impacted you the most in this seminar?
2. What characteristics are you looking for in a spiritual father or mother?

## PART TWO

### God's nurturing, mother's heart: Spiritual mothering

#### God wants to permeate this nurtureless society

He wants to impart to men and women the Father's loving, nurturing heart to others.

#### God wants to impart to women the nurturing heart of the Father

God has deposited a nurturing heart in women just as he has physically given them a womb.

#### Women are crying out for the nurturing aspect of spiritual mothers

- There is a void in today's transient society because families are broken and no longer have the close-knit family structure to nurture them.
- **Isaiah 49:15-16a** *Can a woman forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands...*

### The mother-heart of God

- One Hebrew name for God is *El Shaddai*.
- *El* comes from the root meaning *might and strength*.
- *Shad* is Hebrew for *breast* or *many-breasted one*. It shows tenderness and the desire to nurture us and make us fruitful.

### The Titus 2 mandate

- **Titus 2:3-5** *Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.*
- Paul exhorted older women to put their energies into training and teaching younger women.

### Spiritual mothering is not a program or a goal; it is a life-style

- If older women invest their energies into training younger women, we will see much fruit.
- We can invest in others regardless of the “season” in which we find ourselves.
- Spiritual mothering can start at any chronological age— a 16-year-old can impart her life into someone who is younger. You don’t have to wait until you are an older, mature Christian to spiritually mentor another!

### A spiritual mother comes alongside and puts her arms around a younger woman

A definition for spiritual mothering: *“When a woman possessing faith and spiritual maturity enters into a nurturing relationship with a younger woman in order to encourage and equip her to live for God’s glory.”*<sup>2</sup>

## NOTES

### **Age is not an issue**

The biblical exhortation of older women to train younger women most likely meant that a spiritual mother should be a mature woman who reflects *experience*, regardless of chronological age.

### **Spiritual mothering involves acceptance, encouragement and vulnerability**

- Spiritual mothers accept their daughters where they are without expecting perfection.
- They are vulnerable by sharing their mistakes.
- *Encouragement* means *to inspire courage!*

### **What hinders spiritual mothering?**

#### **Selfishness**

- “I raised my kids, and now I need a break!”
- “I’ve done my duty.”

#### **Fear of rejection/poor self-image**

- “I have nothing to offer.” Suffering from a poor self-image will hinder spiritual mothering.
- Jesus lives within us! We have Jesus to offer!
- It involves risk.
- Remember that it is the character of Christ that qualifies an individual to be a spiritual mother.
- Lasting fruit comes from it. If encouraged and nurtured, spiritual daughters will go even further ahead than their spiritual moms!

#### **See what the Father is doing in your life**

- If you have small children, your first mission is to train them.
- In addition to your children, look for others you can pour your life into.

- Spiritual mothering will look different in different seasons of your life.
- There is no one method of spiritual mothering!
- Are you willing to obey?

### **Our focus must be upward, not on our own needs**

- **Luke 1:39-56** Elizabeth and Mary could have focused on their unique situations, calling attention to their own needs. Instead, upon greeting each other, their focus was upward.
- *“When women do for other women what Elizabeth did for Mary, we will see young women burst forth in lives of praise to God.”*

—Susan Hunt

### **Will we allow God to deposit His nurturing heart in our lives so we can pour our lives into other women?**

- Spiritual mothering relationships can be short or long.
- They can be long distant (letters, phone calls, email contact).
- They can be very informal or with more structure.
- Whatever the Father is doing—allow the deposit God has put in our hearts to burst forth and permeate this nurtureless society and the church!

### **Priscilla and Aquila teams**

- **Acts 18:24-26** Priscilla and Aquila were spiritual parents to Apollos.
- **Romans 16:3-5** The church met in their house.
- Sons and daughters need impartation from both parents.

## NOTES

**There are three vital relationships for each of us to have:**

1. Paul relationships (father/mother)
2. Barnabas relationships (peer)
3. Timothy relationships (son/daughter)

**Spiritual fathering and mothering relationships must be birthed in prayer**

God will lead you into the right relationship!

### PART TWO Questions

1. Which spiritual truth in this session on spiritual mothering stands out to you?
2. Which of the three vital relationships have you experienced?  
Give some examples.

<sup>1</sup> “Similarities between a spiritual and natural father” (1-5) are taken from *The Gift of Apostle*, Dr. David Cannistraci, Regal Books, 1996, pp. 120-124

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual Mothering*, Susan Hunt, Crossway Books, 1992, p. 12.

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# How Does Spiritual Parenting Work Practically?

## PART ONE

**Genesis 1:28** Spiritual parenting is multiplying ourselves over and over again

- Think in terms of future generations!
- Multiplication means *to grow and increase by number*.
- Since you can *have* a spiritual father and *be* a spiritual father simultaneously, spiritual fathers and mothers are constantly released.
- The process multiplies with exponential force because you can mentor and be mentored at the same time.

### **Know with whom you are called to be in relationship**

- You must want to do it because you feel God's specific call on your life.
- You must be committed to their success.

### **Be available as the Lord leads**

- Intentionally go about your task—that of making yourself available.
- The desire to mentor needs to come out of a deep and passionate love relationship with Jesus that spills over into a willingness to make time to serve and love unconditionally.

## NOTES

### Three keys to spiritual parenting principles:

1. **Initiate** the relationship
2. **Build** and encourage their lives
3. **Release** them to do the same thing

#### 1. Initiate the relationship

- Jesus initiated the relationship with the first disciples (Luke 5:4-11, 27-28).
- Jesus took a season of time to watch the lives of those with whom He was in relationship before choosing His closest disciples.
- They left everything to follow Him, but it wasn't until later on, **after a time of prayer** (Luke 6:12-13), that He chose the twelve to be His disciples.
- **Start on your knees in prayer.** The Lord will connect you, by the Holy Spirit, to the right person(s).
- **The relationship must be mutual** There needs to be a sense on both sides that God is asking for a mutual investment in the relationship. "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (Amos 3:3).
- **Love: the pivotal point of the relationship** In addition to training them, Jesus also wanted to *fellowship* with his disciples relationally. He called the twelve that they *might be with Him* (Mark 3:14).

#### 2. Build the relationship

- Jesus healed people, and in the midst of this ministry, taught His disciples (Luke 6:17-20).
- Pro-actively *build* the relationship. Getting to know someone takes intentional effort.



- **Discuss expectations**

What are both sides looking for?

How often will they meet?

Is the relationship meant to be long-term or short-term?

Are there already certain areas of life and ministry that the son or daughter needs to grow in?

How often should the relationship be evaluated?

- **Create an atmosphere of trust and respect.** The son needs to be assured of his father's love for him. Allow him to be himself without fear of judgment or impatience.
- **It is caught more than taught.** Informal interaction models the kingdom of God by showing how Christianity works in real life.
- **On-the-job training.** The goal of spiritual parenting is to increase your children's effectiveness in the kingdom. Take them along!

### 3. Finally, release them to reproduce!

- Jesus sent the disciples out and expected them to reproduce themselves (Luke 9:1-2,10).
- We will know when it is time.
- We need to release the next generation to build their own "homes" and reproduce.
- **An example of how reproduction works:**
- Take your spiritual son or daughter with you when you baptize a new believer.
- The next time, allow the son or daughter to do the baptizing as you assist.
- When the next opportunity to baptize comes, tell your son or daughter to find someone else to train and simply watch them from the sidelines.

## NOTES

- Finally, the son or daughter will be comfortable enough to reproduce himself/herself and will not even need your physical presence. They have learned to reproduce themselves.

### PART ONE Questions

1. Give an example of how you may have experienced any of these spiritual parenting principles, either as a spiritual parent or a spiritual son or daughter.
2. Which of the three keys to spiritual parenting do you believe are most difficult for you? Explain.

## PART TWO

### Practical helps: How does it really work?

#### Pray, pray, pray

- Wrap them in the Lord's protection.
- Paul says in Galatians 4:19 that he labors "in the pains of childbirth" for the Galatian church. He yearns and prays for Christ to be formed in them.

#### Lifetime or short-term commitment?

Discuss the time frame for the relationship. This needs to be evaluated and updated periodically.

**There are spheres of spiritual fathering/mothering relationships**

- Jesus was a spiritual father to the 120 faithful believers that waited in the Upper Room for the promised Holy Spirit.
- In addition, He was in relationship with the 70 disciples He sent out “...two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go” (Luke 10:1).
- Jesus also closely mentored the twelve disciples with whom He traveled day to day.
- Jesus had an inner circle of friends—Peter, James and John.
- Jesus’ closest disciple was John.

**Be transparent and vulnerable**

- Spiritual fathering involves a sense of vulnerability and willingness to open our lives to one another.
- Transparency leads to intimacy. If a father is free to reveal his true feelings, his son learns to open up also.

**Point them to Jesus**

- The truth of Galatians 4:2, that children need guardians and stewards, also applies to our spiritual sons or daughters. However, we always point them to Jesus. No one can ever take the place of our heavenly Father!
- Spiritual fathering is not a way to get people to do what we want them to do or a way to get them to serve our ambitions. Instead, we must help them discern God’s will for their lives and then hold them accountable to do what the Lord has called *them* to do.

**How often do you meet together?**

- Decide on some practical get-together times for the relationship. How often and how long should you meet?
- You may want to set up regular times to meet and communicate.
- Meet both on your turf and on theirs. These planned, regular contacts should be interlaced with as much spontaneous contact as possible.

## NOTES

### **Learn to ask vital questions**

- Mentoring with accountability is done with patience and love. Ask questions to spur your sons or daughters on to new spiritual heights:
  - “How is your relationship with Jesus?”
  - “How is your relationship with your spouse?”
  - “Whom are you praying for?”
  - “Has your thought life been pure?”
  - “What struggles are you having in your life?”
  - “Have you shared your faith this week?”
  - “Are you serving others in love?”
  - “What was your greatest joy this week?”
  - “What was your biggest disappointment?”
  - “What do you see yourself doing 5 or 10 years in the future?”
  - “How can I help you fulfill what the Lord has called you to do?”
- Ask about their relationship with their spouse (if married) and children, or with their parents.
- Ask about their relationship with their church.
- Questions similar to these will motivate your sons and daughters and help them to be more like Christ.

### **Don't think you have to solve every problem**

- There is a danger of the parents taking on too much responsibility for the growth of the children.
- Remember the Good Samaritan? (Luke 10:30-36) He did not feel he had to meet every need the man had, but he made sure the man had his every need met.

### **Maintain proper boundaries**

- If spiritual sons or daughters look to fathers or mothers to solve their problems or meet all their needs, the relationship becomes “need” driven.

- “Dependent relationships become ingrown and create a seedbed for one person to become emotionally dependent on another,” according to counselor Steve Prokopchak.
- Emotional dependency is defined as *the condition resulting when the ongoing presence and/or nurturing of another is believed necessary for personal security.*
- **Proverbs 19:19b** “...if you rescue him, you will have to do it again.”
- **John 5:6b** “Do you want to get well?” Jesus was asking the man if he really wanted to take responsibility for his life after he was healed.

### What if you need help?

If your spiritual son or daughter has a severe, ongoing addiction, you should discern if they would benefit from meeting with someone trained in setting people free through deliverance from demonic oppression or seeing a professional counselor.

### Make it easy to get out of the relationship

- There may come a time in a mentoring relationship that negative interpersonal dynamics make it impossible to continue on.
- First, address the root of the conflict—be candid and communicate.
- Try to resolve it as painlessly as possible.
- If the time comes for a separation in the relationship, discern how to graciously and lovingly bow out.
- Ask a person you both respect to help you and your spiritual son/daughter with this process.

### Having multiple spiritual fathers can be healthy

- God often uses more than one spiritual father or mother in a person’s life according to varying areas of need.
- For example, a spiritual father could mentor someone specifically in the areas of healthy family relationships.
- Another mentor could share his expertise in the area of financial management and budgeting, yet another in the area of Christian leadership or a specific ministry.

## NOTES

### **Fathering new believers**

- You will want to disciple a young Christian—spend time studying the Bible together, answering questions, and praying together.
- A biblical foundations series<sup>1</sup> is an excellent tool to use in a spiritual parenting relationship for younger Christians because they have the specific need of getting grounded in God's Word (see page 60 for the Biblical Foundation Series we use).

### **Homogeneous fathering**

- Widows who lost spouses years ago could mentor more recent widows.
- Businessmen benefit from having other businessmen mentor them in sound business practices.
- Older professional women can mentor younger professional women.
- Young mothers need older mothers to mentor them in areas of motherhood.

### **Men mentor men, women mentor women (Titus 2:3-4,6)**

Maintaining the boundaries of friendship between a man and a woman can be tricky. Christian love can be misinterpreted, leading to inappropriate emotional and physical attachments.

### **Individual and group mentoring**

- Some spiritual fathers will maintain a one-on-one mentoring relationship with a spiritual son and also mentor him in a small group setting where he meets with a group of sons to pray, study the Bible together, and discuss life issues.
- A woman or a man can be involved in “group mentoring” both men and/or women; however, one-on-one spiritual parenting relationships should follow the Titus 2 model.

### **Hand over the ministry to those you are training**

- Keep handing the ministry over to those you are training with a mentoring-style leadership.

- Allow your spiritual sons and daughters to try new things for the first time and succeed. This is how the Ephesians 4:12 ministry of “equipping of the saints for the work of ministry (NKJ)” is supposed to work.

### **Learn to empower those whom you mentor**

Servanthood must be the crux of the parenting relationship.

When the relationship centers on servanthood, it will rarely become selfish.

### **Your children will grow up, and changes will occur**

- When spiritual parents encourage their spiritual children to grow up and have their own spiritual children, the relationship changes.
- Now spiritual parents will talk to their son or daughter about their own parenting experiences.

## **PART TWO Questions**

1. If you have ever experienced being a spiritual parent, give an example of things you did to accomplish it.
2. What’s one principle you have learned about spiritual parenting in this session that you can practically apply to your life?

<sup>1</sup> For basic Christian doctrine to help a new believer grow spiritually: *Biblical Foundations Series*, Larry Kreider, House to House Publications. (See page 60)

## NOTES



# Fathering Within Your Field

## PART ONE

### God gives spiritual fields of ministry to all of us

**II Corinthians 10:13-16** *We, however, will not boast beyond proper **limits**, but will confine our boasting to the **field** God has assigned to us, a **field** that reaches even to you. We are not going too far in our boasting, as would be the case if we had not come to you, for we did get as far as you with the gospel of Christ. Neither do we go beyond our **limits** by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our **area of activity** among you will greatly expand so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in another man's **territory**.*

#### **Definition: Field or metron**

The Greek word translated *field (sphere)* in II Corinthians 10, is *metron* which is *a measure of activity that defines the limits of one's power and influence.*

#### **Your field(s) is assigned to you by God**

- Every Christian has various spiritual fields of influence.
- These areas of influence give individuals opportunities to experience God's blessing and empowerment.  
Example: Marriage field, children field, church field, community field, spiritual parent field, business field.

#### **Your field(s) has boundaries**

- A farmer does not take his tractor and plow in another farmer's field.

## NOTES

- Never presume to speak into another's life unless he has opened his boundaries to you. A relationship of trust must be built which opens the door.

### **Do not surrender your field(s) to another**

- **Genesis 1:26:** God gave Adam and Eve authority over the world, but they surrendered their authority to Satan. Parents, pastors, etc. cannot surrender their field to others.
- **God gives you grace for your field(s)**
- **Ephesians 4:7** *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.*
- The word *apportioned* is a translation of the same word *metron* found in II Corinthians 10:13. For each metron or field of ministry, there is a special grace given for it.

### **Praying within your spiritual field(s)**

- Pray for the Lord's wisdom and blessing within your own field.
- Don't overstep boundaries by presuming you know how to pray for another's field because you think things should be changed in that field.

### **Honoring the fields of others**

Paul only boasted of the Corinthian church because he was responsible before the Lord for them (II Corinthians 10:13-15).

### **Don't plow in your son's/daughter's field**

- During the discipleship movement of the 1970's—Good discipleship principles were sometimes overshadowed by unhealthy one-on-one relationships where leaders required those under their authority to get their approval before making decisions.
- True spiritual fathers will never ask their sons to make "unholy covenants" or make decisions for them.

**Holy covenant vs. an unholy covenant**

- **A holy covenant** is a promise or undertaking on the part of God. The only covenants that are holy and last for a lifetime are
  1. the covenant I have with Christ to serve Him completely
  2. the covenant I have with my wife to love her and cherish her “until death do us part”
  3. the covenant I have with the body of Christ to love her and be a blessing to the Lord’s bride
  
- **An unholy covenant** is made with a person or group that hinders one from obeying the Holy Spirit’s leading in his life.
  
- **James 4:13-15** *Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.”*
  
- To say we will always have a close relationship with someone can become bondage. We must take the attitude of “if the Lord wills!”
  
- We do not know if we will maintain a long-term, close fathering or mothering relationship with the spiritual children we are now mentoring. This is up to the Lord, not up to us.
  
- True spiritual fathers never ask their sons to make unholy covenants or make decisions for them or seek to control their spiritual children.

**Remember, God assigns us to spiritual fields**

**Psalm 16:5-6** *Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

**Your field(s) yields fruit**

- When you are cultivating your field within its boundaries and receiving God’s grace for the field, it will yield fruit.
  
- Rather than limit us, boundary lines allow us to be fruitful in our spheres of influence.

## NOTES

### **God determines and expands our field(s)**

- God gave the apostles Paul and Peter different fields to reach (see Acts, chapters 17-21).
- Paul's call and anointing was to reach the Gentiles, and Peter's call and anointing was to the Jews (Galatians 2:7).
- When fields of ministry coexist in this way, there is unity and respect for each other.

### **Be responsible within your present field**

- Build it, and God will enhance it.
- David is the classic example—he was called and anointed to be King, but Israel already had a king. David did not seize or attempt to overthrow authority. David allowed God to promote him in His time.

### **Delegate authority in your field(s)**

- You can temporarily delegate to others the authority God has given you in a field of ministry.
- For example, when parents are away from home, they might ask the oldest child to be responsible for the house. This child has received delegated authority for his parent's field.

### **Do not tolerate the enemy's activity in your field(s)**

- Paul had a sense of responsibility for the Corinthian church (II Corinthians 11:28).
- We must be responsible, as spiritual fathers and mothers, to stand in the gap for our spiritual children because they are in our field.
- The enemy tries to come into healthy fields and take control.

### **Standing together in our field(s)**

Pastors meet regularly to pray for our area of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Recently, on the front page of the newspaper: crime dropped 28% in the city within the past year.

**Why is it important to stay in the right field?**

- If you are in the right field, it will yield fruit.
- A word of caution: Just because you have been effective in a certain ministry or in leadership in one part of the world, do not assume you will get the same results at another location.

**PART ONE Questions**

1. From what you just learned, what is a field of ministry?
2. What do you see as your primary field(s) of ministry?

**PART TWO****Spiritual parents are called to teach their children how to make decisions**

**Acts 15** Let's look at the first century church and see what they did when they faced a crisis in Acts 15. The three scriptural principles in this section apply to all levels of spiritual fathering and mothering and spiritual families.

**Principles to make father-like decisions**

- **The three principles:**
  1. God speaks through a leader.
  2. God speaks through a team.
  3. God speaks through His people.
- When one of the principles is given greater precedence than the others, it can cause problems in decision-making. When principle 1 is emphasized, autocratic leadership emerges. When principle 2 is given priority, having to come to a consensus causes decision-making to move very slowly. When principle 3 is emphasized, the decision is led by what everyone thinks, often causing confusion.

## NOTES

### New Testament decision-making in Acts 15

- There was a disagreement in the church about circumcision. Verse 2: *This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate...*
- Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to help resolve the issue. They first interacted with the congregation there. Verse 4: *...they were welcomed by the church...to whom they reported everything God had done through them.*
- Paul and Barnabas then met with the apostles and elders. Verse 6: *The apostles and elders met to consider this question.*
- Then the head apostolic leader, James, after listening to the Lord's wisdom through the other leaders, gives the final verdict. Verse 19: *It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God.*
- Although James was the clear leader in Acts 15, he did not make the decision alone. The other apostles and elders (and the congregation) worked together as a team, and then James gave the final decision. The New Testament Christians maximized the strengths and minimized the weaknesses of each principle of decision-making.

### 1. A father who leads the way

- **Numbers 27:16** Moses asks for a replacement (Joshua) to lead God's people. *May the Lord...appoint a man over this community...one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the Lord's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.*
- God always calls and anoints someone to lead the way and speaks through this "primary vision carrier."
- In Acts 15, James was the head elder and apostle at Jerusalem who held this role. This is often called *episcopal government*.
- Examples of this "leader who leads the way" leadership principle—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Deborah, Gideon, David, Jesus, Peter, James, Paul—the list goes on and on.
- Primary church fathers are in positions of authority but they must not lead as domineering CEO's. Misguided CEO's often *use* people, but spiritual fathers and mothers *serve* people (Mark 10:45).
- When someone leads solely through this type of decision-making, it can become dangerous—fostering an autocratic controlling style of leadership: husbands who abuse their wives, or those who believe they have a right to tell others what to do in a way that violates their personal authority and responsibility before the Lord.

## 2. God calls a team to work together

- The Lord speaking through a team of leaders who discern His voice together is called *presbyterian government*.
- In Titus 1:5, Paul told Titus to appoint elders in every church.
- Moses and Aaron and Miriam worked together as a team in the book of Exodus.
- Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in every church (Acts 14:23) and worked with them as an eldership team.
- The down side to only applying this leadership principle when making decisions is that if a team of elders cannot come to a unanimous decision, the final result could be that no decision is made.

## 3. God speaks through His people

- In Acts 6:1-7, leaders we sometimes call *deacons* were chosen. Scripture says *the people* chose these leaders and the apostles appointed them. Wise leaders will listen to what God says through His people.
- Leaders must value the people whom they serve.
- It is a godly principle to receive input from those you serve before making a decision that affects them. Before an important decision is made, wise church leaders will publicly share the facts and receive godly input so as to leave no room for doubt and discontent among the congregation.
- Some churches rely heavily on the practice of hearing what God's people are saying and then voting on the situation. This is called *congregational government*.
- When we only apply a *congregational style* of leadership to decision-making, one group nearly always feels like they lose and the other group feels like they win.

### A key to decision-making: Acknowledge the Lord first

- The key to all decision-making is simply knowing that only the Lord can give us wisdom for making decisions.
- Some leadership teams become so familiar with each other they no longer continue to acknowledge the Lord, and they stray from listening to His voice.

## NOTES

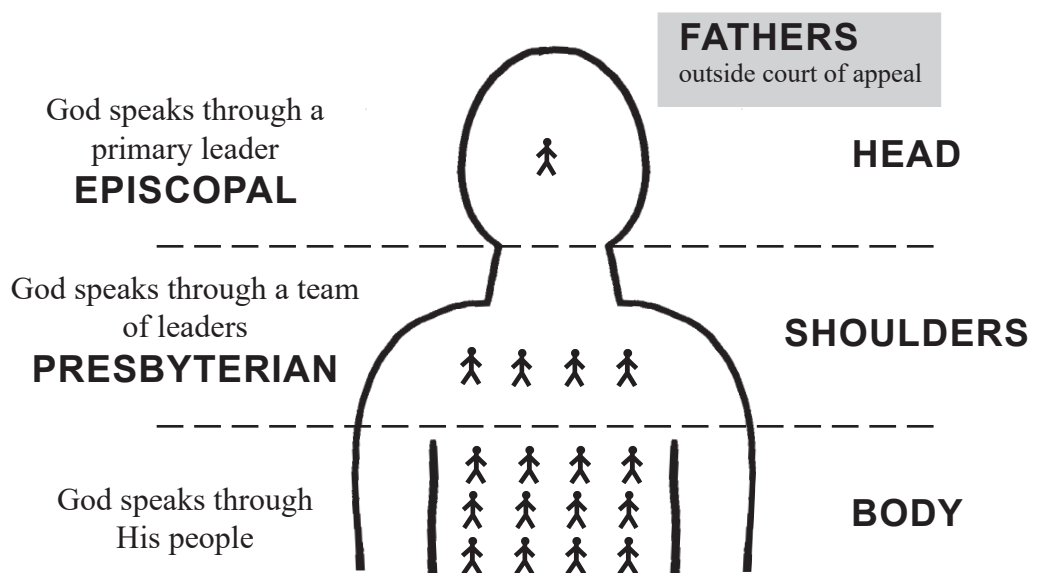
- **Proverbs 3:5-6** *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.*
- **Matthew 18:19** *...if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you...*

### Combine the strengths—God using a leader, using a team and honoring God’s people

A leader must make an effort to focus on the strengths of all three decision-making principles in order to make balanced decisions.

#### “Head, shoulders and body” balanced decision-making

- **Psalm 133** *How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down... on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes...for there the Lord bestows his blessing...*
- The head (primary leader) of every team needs to be properly attached to the shoulders (the others on the team) and the body (the people) through a God-ordained relationship of trust and affirmation. If the head is appropriately attached to the shoulders (through relationship, trust, servanthood, prayer and proper communication), and the shoulders properly support and affirm the head, there will be unity, and God will command a blessing as indicated in Psalm 133.





**Balanced decision-making:**

- The leadership team needs to listen to what the Lord is saying through the body.
- The primary leader listens to what the Lord is saying through the team.
- Then the primary leader speaks what the Lord is saying, and the others affirm the Lord's direction.

**In order for biblical decision-making to be effective, the members of the team must have a sense of faith that:**

- they are called to serve on the team
- others on the team are called with them in their specific roles
- the primary leader is called to serve in his role as the leader of the team

**With disagreements, avoid the rule of the negative**

- On a leadership team, the leaders should submit to one another and try to reach a unanimous decision, but this is not always possible.
- If we were bound by always having unanimous decision-making, in a team of eight, if seven agree and one disagrees, the negative would carry the decision.

**Beware of having a “pain in the neck.”**

**Biblical decision-making should come through:** fasting and prayer and spiritual discernment (Acts 13:1-3) involving all three leadership principles.

**We all need fathers to provide an outside court of appeal**

While we do our best to implement all three decision-making principles in our relationships on all levels, it is wise to be sure to have spiritual fathers or mothers to serve as an outside court of appeal. This is especially important when problems surface.

## NOTES

### **Spiritual fathers teach their spiritual children to guard their hearts from selfishness and to trust God for His direction**

- James 3:13-17 *Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such wisdom does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*
- James warns us to guard our hearts from selfish ambition in decision-making. We can make a bad decision, but if our heart is right, the Lord will direct our paths and turn our bad decision around for good (Romans 8:28).
- Being Christ-like is more important than being “right.”

### **Spiritual fathers and mothers teach their spiritual sons and daughters to make decisions in a way that values people!**

## PART TWO Questions

1. Which of the three decision-making principles have you experienced most often?
2. Give an example from your life describing how applying these truths of biblical decision-making helps you become a more godly spiritual leader.

# Is God Calling You to Become a Spiritual Parent?

## PART ONE

**Malachi 4:5-6** *See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse.*

### How spiritual parents can be trained from the ground up

- Spiritual impartations are passed on practically and easily from fathers to sons as they are trained in the spiritual “boot camp” of small groups.
- Many times these spiritual fathers and mothers move on to further leadership roles in the church.

### Our history: Serving as the pastor of a cell-based church in Pennsylvania for 15 years

In the process of our church growing and multiplying, hundreds of spiritual fathers and mothers were released as ministers to God’s people through the “cell” groups. Many moved on to assume roles of greater responsibility in the Lord’s kingdom.

### We are all called to spiritual parenting

- Not everyone trained in the small group will become an apostolic father, a local pastor, or even a small group leader.
- But since every believer has a commission to lead new Christians into saving faith and mentor others, **we are all called to be spiritual fathers and mothers**, whether we “birth” them in Christ or take them under our wing to parent them through “spiritual adoption.”

## FIVE TYPES OF SPIRITUAL PARENTS

### 1. Grassroots fathers—God’s call for all of us!

- A grassroots father/mother is a believer who is involved in discipling other believers in a small group setting.
- Many of these spiritual parents are cell group leaders and assistant leaders who see their group members as a spiritual family who are in need of nurturing and training to become spiritual fathers or mothers.
- These grassroots parents give basic training to those in their small group.
- Again, we do not have to lead a small group to become a spiritual parent. We simply need to take a spiritual son or daughter “under our wing.”

### 2. Local church fathers

- He is a pastor-father of a congregation, often consisting of many small groups within the local church.
- A local church father oversees not only one or two spiritual families (cells) at a time, but a whole team of spiritual fathers and mothers (small group leaders) in the church.

### 3. Apostolic fathers

- When our church was fifteen years old, we had to move to another branch of spiritual fathering to accomplish what God had called us to do. So we gave our church away! Our church decentralized to become eight local churches. (Each congregation became self-governing.)
- These spiritual fathers give spiritual oversight, protection, and serve as an outside court of appeal to the senior leaders of the local churches, within a family of churches.
- Our transition as a church required us to form an Apostolic Council to give spiritual oversight to the leadership of all of the self-governing congregations. These spiritual leaders became “apostolic fathers.”
- There are hundreds of new apostolic movements springing up throughout the world. Apostolic movements are led by apostolic fathers.

**The Lord is placing the lonely in families**

- **Psalms 68:6** the Lord tells us He is placing “the lonely in families.”
- There are many lonely leaders today who are looking for apostolic spiritual fathers and mothers.
- The Lord is hearing their cries, and raising thousands of apostolic fathers in our day who have a call and passion to serve these fatherless spiritual leaders and ministers who serve in local churches.

**This is not built by a system or program, but through God-ordained relationships**

- Churches who have embarked on cell ministry without understanding spiritual fathering often have only started another religious small group program.
- The church is built through our Lord Jesus Christ by God-ordained relationships.

**4. Fathers of regions**

- The Lord is restoring the unity He prayed for in John 17:21.
- Walls that have divided denominations and churches for centuries are coming down.
- Pastors and other spiritual leaders in the same town or region who never knew one another are now finding each other, praying together regularly, and supporting each other.
- Spiritual fathers will continue to emerge in your region and stand together as servant-leaders for the Lord’s kingdom to function properly.

**5. The fivefold fathers**

- **Ephesians 4:11-12** *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach the unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

## NOTES

- God is raising modern-day apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (fivefold ministers) in His church today to equip the saints to become ministers themselves.
- **Numbers 8:23-26** God gives the Levites their job description, and the principle applies today.
- **Principle learned:** Get behind the next generation and support their leadership!
- **The origins of the fivefold ministry gifts are from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the**
- Apostle of apostles, “...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21b).
- Prophet of prophets, “At first his disciples did not understand all this...” (John 12:16a). As a prophet, Jesus explained what they didn’t understand.
- Evangelist of evangelists, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).
- Teacher of teachers, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am” (John 13:13).
- Pastor of pastors, “I am the good shepherd...” (John 10:11a).
- **Fivefold spiritual fathers and mothers train the next generation in their specific gifts and calling.** They speak with the Lord’s authority because they represent one of the ministry gifts of Jesus Christ.

### PART ONE Questions

1. Give some examples of spiritual fathers and mothers from one or more of these five categories.
2. What is the Lord speaking to you as you learn about the various types of spiritual fathers and mothers in the body of Christ?

## PART TWO

### **The importance of spiritual gifts in ministry**

- Not every believer will operate as a fivefold father in the ministry of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher.
- However, each believer can minister with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit in the gifts of the Spirit according to I Corinthians 12:7-11.

### **Restoring both the power and fruit of the Spirit**

- We need all of the various kinds of spiritual parenting in each area of church life as the Lord restores the truth of Malachi 4:5-6.
- There must be a balance of both the power and fruit of the Spirit to accomplish it (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Much of the impartation for both the power and the fruit of the Spirit comes through personal spiritual parenting.

### **Spiritual fathering and mothering is a part of the Lord's plan to restore both the power of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit to His church**

- Fruit must be cultivated in order to grow properly.
- Let's learn to look to others who have cultivated the soil of our lives as they parented us, so we can bring forth fruit that will remain for the next generation of leadership.

### **God is raising exceptional spiritual fathers and mothers**

- May every saint capture the revelation of the call to minister!
- Spiritual parents and children together will serve and encourage each other toward maturity.

### **Are you a brother or a father?**

- There is a big difference between being a father and being an older brother—especially the kind of brother exemplified in the prodigal son story.

## NOTES

- A brother will inspire you, but a father will direct you. A brother may wound you, but a father will heal you. A brother often sees you for who you are, a father sees your potential. A brother has a tendency to judge you, while a father will lovingly correct you. A brother may condemn you for wasting your inheritance on riotous living, but a father will love you, woo you back home, and restore you.

### The benefits of obedience

- **Mark 10:29-30** *I tell you the truth, Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.*
- Jesus understood that His disciples left their families to follow Him. He reminded them of the benefits of their obedience.
- The person who gives up their comfort zone will gain spiritual children!
- God loves to use weak people who only find their strength in Him.
- You may never feel entirely ready to be a spiritual parent—you just need to be willing.

### A new generation of leaders

- The Lord is committed to raising up a whole new generation of spiritual parents among us.
- We meet this new breed of leaders week after week as we travel and speak throughout the world.
- They are marked by *humility* and *servanthood*.
- **Acts 2:17-18** *In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.*
- In the last days, the Lord is going to bestow large measures of His Spirit on His people—male and female, young and old.
- As spiritual parents, our expectation is that the next generation will have a much greater spiritual mantle than we have.



## FINAL CHALLENGE!

## NOTES

### “Go, find a son or daughter”

- God wants to give us a legacy of spiritual sons and daughters but we must connect with them.
- We must find them and make them our children.
- The anointing of God on our lives can be multiplied greatly through our spiritual sons and daughters.
- **I Kings 19:19** Elijah obeyed the voice of the Lord, pursued his call to find his Elisha, and then trained him in all he had received from the Lord. The Lord gave Elisha a double portion. May the Lord give us much of His grace to do the same! God bless you richly!

### PART TWO Questions

1. Ask yourself: Who are two or three potential spiritual children the Lord may be placing in your field of ministry?
2. Are there any potential spiritual parents in your life as you endeavor to fulfill God’s mandate for you to be a spiritual parent?

Break into groups of two or three to pray. Pray for each other to be responsible as spiritual parents in the fields of ministry God is giving you.

## SPIRITUAL FATHERING AND MOTHERING

# Action List

Write in one or two sentences what the Lord spoke to you after each session.

\_\_\_ A.

\_\_\_ B.

\_\_\_ C.

\_\_\_ D.

\_\_\_ E.

\_\_\_ F.

\_\_\_ G.

\_\_\_ H.

\_\_\_ I.

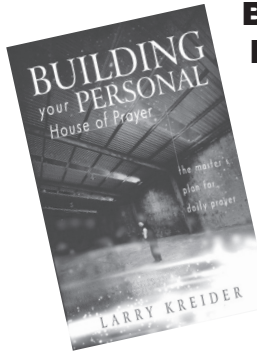
\_\_\_ J.

\_\_\_ K.

\_\_\_ L.

Prayerfully prioritize these areas so you'll know what to focus on first.

## NOTES



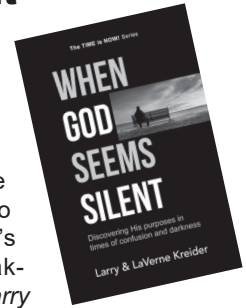
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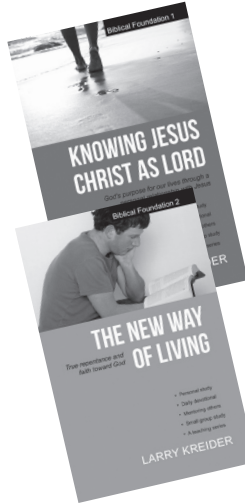
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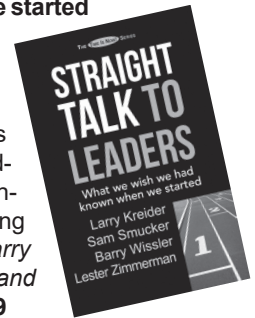
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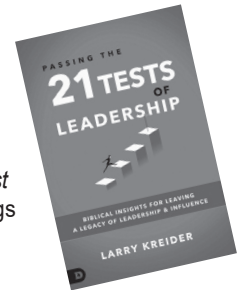
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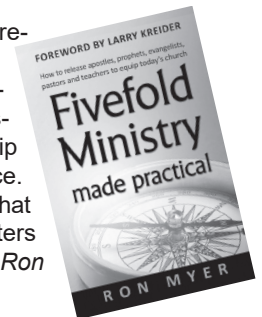


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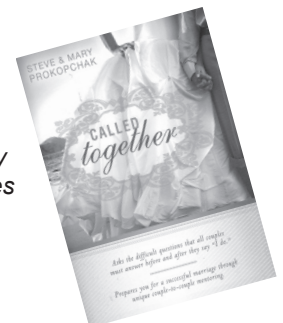
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