

The response of a son to a spiritual father

The term “spiritual father” is so new and different to us, we have no point of reference with which to understand it. Or is it? Paul said to the Corinthians; “I have become your father in the Lord”.(see 1 Cor. 4) He also said; “Imitate me as I follow the Lord.” (see 1 Cor. 11:1) He referred to Timothy and others as his “sons”.(see 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 1:18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Titus 2:4; Philm. 1:10; 1 Peter 5:13) We know Paul was not married, so we must conclude Timothy was not his natural son and of course, he was not a natural father to the Corinthians. Timothy became Paul’s disciple, thus a spiritual son. (Acts 16)

So, please note based on the references above one cannot be a spiritual son, without a spiritual father. Our present culture has exposed us to a pastor of a local church. Generally, he or she is the person who is responsible for the people who choose to join that local assembly. It is his/her job to see to it that things run smoothly. First on the list is to see the Sunday morning meeting conducted with excellence. Good music, good prayers, especially a good sermon as well as an appeal for money. To accomplish this the pastor has to spend many hours in systematic study for the sermon as well as many hours with the music ministry, deacons, ushers, prayer teams and various others who will participate on Sunday. Bless his heart, his “intentions are good”, but remember good has one too many “O’s” in it. With all the responsibilities list above, **this leaves the pastor little time to relate with the people of the congregation, and especially his own family.** And, the message of the kingdom is relational. It must start with you ruling over your own soul, and requiring the assistance of others to watch for your soul as well (Hebrews 13:17). Then, move to you watching for the soul of your help-meet, your children, afterwards those the Lord has given you to disciple.

A liturgical setting may give the title of father to a man, however, most of the time the people of the congregation know little about him other than he has been to seminary, he is recognized by the denomination, and he preaches well. The chances that he will be sent to another congregation are highly probable. Even independent charismatic or fundamentalist congregations will see the pastor “move-on” after a few years. **This is another reason relationships are not a top priority in most church settings.**

Paul seems to have had intimate relationships with his “sons”. He knew them and they knew him. He was willing to give himself completely for his sons, so much so, his health was injured. He said; he taught day and night, he labored among them and he prayed for them day and night. (see Acts 10:31; 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8) Paul served these people as a natural father would serve his natural sons. **His love for his sons, is summarized in 1 Corinthians 13, where he directs his thoughts of Agape’ love to those for which he was responsible.**

Jesus had the same situation as Paul. We know He had twelve disciples. Men who had been with Him from the beginning and had witnessed the work He did on the earth. Please note the following passage of Scripture expressing the intimate relationship He had with them:

John 17:6-12

6 "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name — the name you gave me — so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.
NIV

Jesus made some dramatic statements regarding the twelve.

1. He tells the Father they were His because the Father gave them to Him. **We know these men were not natural sons of Jesus. They became sons by receiving Him.** (see John 1:12 – 13) With the exception of Judas, they completed their walk with Him and went on to do greater things.

2. **Jesus introduced them to The Father. By allowing Jesus to father them, He showed them The Father.** Many references in Scripture tell us; Jesus came to reveal The Father. In fact, He said; "If you have seen Me, you have seen The Father." (see John 14:9) **Please note the plague of our present society is a pandemic of fatherlessness.** As the Scriptures tell us; we have ten-thousand teachers but not many fathers. (see 1 Cor. 4) I believe **God wants to change this by challenging many men to, first become sons to a father, so they can mature and become a father to many others.** Employing this concept The Father will be revealed by the fathers who are following Him.

This is the very pattern Jesus employed with the twelve, so they could become fathers to the people The Father wanted to assign to them. Notice the word “assign”, the scripture clearly mentions that the Father will set the members in His body of believers as it pleases Him, not as it pleases me.

3. Jesus was praying for them, not the world. These men had been assigned to Him by the Father. He was God’s representative on the earth to show them The Father. **Jesus was not trying to “win the lost at any cost.” He was not trying to build a big or excellent church. He was following The Father’s orders as He related to the twelve. In fact, He asked The Father to give them the glory that The Father had given to Him.**

4. They have obeyed your word. How did they get the word? There was no Bible at that time. Jesus didn’t preach sermons to them. Jesus did speak to the multitudes but only in parables. He said He did this so the multitudes would not understand. (see Matthew 13) **Jesus spoke to the twelve in intimate settings.** Some were one-on-one; others were with the three and others with all twelve. **When He did this He presented the word of God to the disciples (sons).** Jesus modeled The Father to the twelve by His actions, words and by his demeanor.

5. **Jesus did not only teach good things, He modeled good things by the life He led.** He showed the twelve the intimacy He had with The Father. He revealed The Father’s love for mankind. He showed how The Father had chosen man to be formed in His image. How man had been chosen to be the heirs of God’s great kingdom. How through man, The Father’s plan would be initiated and completed on the earth. Jesus demonstrated The Father by becoming a father to the twelve. Their task would be to become fathers and demonstrate The Father to the next group of people the Lord had chosen.

With the examples of Jesus and Paul it is clear to see that fathers are required to show The Father to those the Lord would call to be sons of His. So, **although the idea of fathers and sons is new to us, it is not new to God.** In fact, the whole Bible is a story of a Father and Son.

Finally, with all that’s been stated thus far, it would seem a response is required for those of us who acknowledge this revelation, and have adhere to and obeyed this revelation. A revelation is just that “a revelation” if there is no response. So the question is, what should be the response of a son to a spiritual father?

Has God called you as one of His sons? **To be a legitimate son you will have to walk with a spiritual father whose objective is to show you The Father.** He would be a man who in turn has a spiritual father. Someone you can trust and someone who loves you and has time for you; but above all, a man whom the Spirit of the Living God has assigned to you.

Jesus said; “My sheep hear My voice”. It’s not so much that God has to speak to us through a loud speaker concerning who our spiritual father is. The question is, who do you feel comfortable with when you talk about your life, or who encourages you, sees potential in you, loves you, speaks highly of you, and sees you from God’s perspective? It most likely would be a man you know who has a deep abiding walk with the Lord. He does not need to be older than you; however, he must have a maturity beyond your present position in the body of Christ. He should not be a peer or buddy who you can “hang-out with.”

He should not be a mentor or life-coach. A mentor supplies information like Bible studies or book reviews. A life-coach is motivational in nature, much like a cheer-leader urging you to “give it your all”. He can’t simply be looked on as an advisor. Our present culture has relegated the church pastor to this position. Let me say, there is plenty of room for the expression of the “gift of pastor”; however, this gift has been distorted and misunderstood in our present day church culture. Jesus gave the word to His disciples. Your spiritual father will give you the word for the benefit of your maturity.

The objective of this relationship is for the benefit of the son rather than the benefit of the father. The maturity of the son is the joy of the spiritual father. He will help you discover your destiny in the Lord. He will help you unfold your giftings and callings as it relates to the body of Christ. He will aid you in maturing through the sufferings that must come your way. Jesus learned obedience through suffering. We will be called to do the same and without a spiritual father most of the sufferings will not mature us they will simply be sufferings.

As we go through the sufferings, the spiritual father will be able to show us what The Father is doing in us and for His benefit. The spiritual father will be able to show us the schemes of the enemy vs. the hand of God in our lives. Our spiritual father will guide us through the stages of our sonship until we become mature and represent the Lord as a mature son.

Our spiritual father should have no desire to control us, but have a desire for us to hear and understand the voice of God. However, when the spiritual father gives a suggestion we should prayerfully consider his suggestion and talk with the Lord regarding the suggestion. This is a key statement I’m about to say, “if we regard the man as an advisor, his voice is among many. If he is regarded as a father we value the relationship and know The Father has assigned him to us.

Let’s look at some aspect of honoring and walking with a spiritual father.

A son listens to his father. He sees his spiritual father as an answer to prayer and a gift from God. He asks for and accepts with gratefulness the wisdom of the father.

He does not see the spiritual father as an advisor whose advice blends into the advice of many advisors. **He will not hide from his father. He will discuss his thoughts, concerns and deep feelings with his father.**

By doing this he will learn patience. He will begin to get confirmation from the father that he is hearing from The Heavenly Father. He will begin to make the transition from his orphan tendencies to the realization that he truly is a son of God.

He will stop running, hiding and shifting blame. He will stand up to his own mistakes and learn from them. His desire to, acquire, possess and control will be eroded as he begins to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. He will stop being competitive. He will no longer be disappointed by such things as the small number of folks who showed up for the meeting, in fact, he will not think about who did not show up.

Honoring our spiritual father is by no means a legal requirement but a response to God's assigned father whose responsibility is to disciple us to hear and respond to The Heavenly Father.

Heb 13:7-8

⁷ Remember your **leaders**, who spoke the **word of God** to you. Consider the outcome of their **way of life** and imitate their **faith**.
⁸ **Jesus Christ** is the same yesterday and today and forever. NIV

Heb 13:17

¹⁷ Obey your **leaders** and submit to their **authority**. They keep **watch** over you **as men** who must give an account. Obey them **so** that their **work will be a joy**, not a **burden**, for that would be of **no** advantage to you. NIV

The next Scripture emphatically tells us to obey and submit to our spiritual father.

These are hard words for our present culture. Our thoughts immediately go to our orphan thinking of abusive fathers, bosses and church leaders. But, look where the emphasis is in this Scripture. They (the spiritual father) must watch and give an account to the Lord. Jesus demonstrated this in John 17 in His High Priestly Prayer.

John 17:6-11

⁶ "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the **world**. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your **word**. ⁷ Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸ For I gave them the **words** you gave me and they **accepted** them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹ I pray for them. I am not praying for the **world**, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is **mine**. And **glory** has come to me through them. NIV

What a wonderful expression of a fathers love for his spiritual children. Jesus expressed His concern and Agape' love for His spiritual sons. Our spiritual fathers do the same for us. The greater burden is on them. They, like Jesus must give an account for us.

So we are told to make it easy for them or it would be unprofitable for us. Again, hard words to the ears of our present culture.

Remember the goal is the maturity of the son. The maturity of the son will bring us to the place of serving God in accordance to the destiny God has assigned. In this way the body of Christ will become mature so the Bride will make herself ready and be presented without spot or wrinkle.

To become a spiritual father one must first become a spiritual son. The son must submit himself or herself to the spiritual father whom the Holy Spirit assigns. This needn't be done in haste but should be intentional.

As the son matures, he will be expected to hear The Father's voice. The spiritual father will continually point the son to The Father. The spiritual father is not afraid to allow the son to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes, however, the son will be warned regarding situations that might harm him.

By submitting to the spiritual father the son will quickly learn he is not to compete with the father or with other sons. **He must be honest and forthright with the father.** Hiding from the father or hiding things from the father will not make it easy for the son. Talking in spiritual or vague terms will be exposed by the Holy Spirit. If you are walking with a spiritual father, honor him. Listen to him. **Draw out the wisdom he has for you.** The power of the draw is directly connected to yielded heart.

We will be able to continue this discuss at our retreat, so please keep what I'm sending you in a notebook, in the following order:

- 1) Spirit of Sonship e-book
- 2) The responsibilities of a father to a son
- 3) The response of a son to a father
- 4) Questions (this should be next to the last section in the notebook)
- 5) Notes (this should be the last section in the notebook)

Thanks, to those who have responded concerning March 11 & 12, and for the feedback that was submitted thus far concerning the "responsibilities of a spiritual father. I love you, and grace and peace be with you!