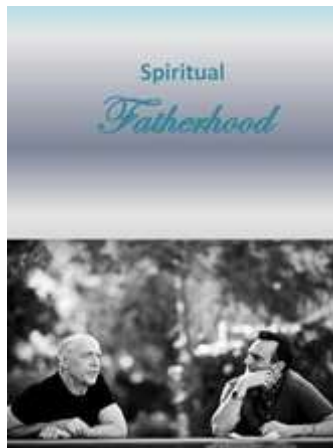




GodsWord Ministries

Telling His story to the World

Spiritual Fatherhood



*We preach: Christ in us - the **Hope** of realizing the glory.*

We proclaim Him (Jesus Christ, the Lord), guiding and admonishing everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom (i.e. comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God), that every person may be presented mature (i.e. full-grown, complete, and perfect) in Christ. (Col 1:27-28)

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1. [INTRODUCTION](#)

Spiritual fatherhood is one of the most misunderstood topics, yet one of the greatest needs in the Kingdom of God and in the Body of Christ!

In this short teaching, I will endeavour to give some clarity and exposition on this much-debated subject.

We are inundated with so much information on a daily basis – people giving us their opinion, viewpoint and perspective on different matters pertaining to God. We are constantly being told about principles, keys, programs and methods that will supposedly bring us to a life of abundance and success.

I ask myself the question: is this what life is all about? Is life only about me living in abundance and achieving success – or is there a side of life that I am missing out on?

Is life not about caring for one another? Is it not about true friendships and relationships where the love of God, which is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, finds true meaning and purpose?

- I am persuaded that this is exactly what the **apostle Paul** had in mind when he wrote the following to the Corinthians:

1Co 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.

1Co 4:16 Therefore I urge you, imitate me. (NKJV)

1Co 4:15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel

1Co 4:16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me. (ESV)

You will notice from the above Scriptures that one Translation says “in Christ Jesus I **have begotten you** through the gospel”, while another one says “I **became your father** in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (I will elaborate on this later on).

Paul said: “**I became your father**” indicating a process he willingly went through to reach a level of spiritual maturity.

- *Before I start elaborating on this subject, I emphatically want to say:*

Spiritual fatherhood IS NOT:

- A calling
- An assignment
- God appointing and anointing you to be a father
- A ministry
- The establishing of a father-son relationship where sons report to the father and the father exercises spiritual authority over sons
- Sons looking for someone to be his/her spiritual father
- Reigning and ruling over people

- The source and channel of our spiritual authority (the doctrine that if I submit to the authority of someone else I, in turn, will have authority). No! God, through Christ by the Holy Spirit is my source for spiritual authority!
- The source and channel of our anointing and blessings. No! God is the One who has anointed and established us in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:21); we have an anointing from the Holy One and know all things (1 John 2:20). The God and Father of Jesus Christ has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

1. THE CONCEPT “FATHER” EXPLAINED

Biblical meaning and application of the word and concept “Father” - (Hebrew “āb” and Greek “patēr”):

The word “Father” is spoken generally of men and in a special sense of God

The Greek word *“patēr”* comes from a root signifying:

“a nourisher, protector, and upholder”

Both the Hebrew word *“āb”* and the Greek word *“patēr”* have the following meanings attached to it:

- 1) Father of an individual
- 2) God as Father of his people
- 3) Head or founder of a household, group, family, tribe or clan
- 4) Ancestor
- 5) Originator, progenitor
- 6) Producer, generator (figuratively)
- 7) Benevolence and protection (figuratively)
- 8) Term of respect and honour
- 9) Ruler or chief (specifically)
- 10) Patron of a class, profession, or art
- 11) Model

12) Mentor

The title and concept of "Father" is applied as follows:

1. To a father, genitor, by whom one is begotten :

*Luk 2:48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, "Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, **your father and I** have been anxiously looking for You."*

2. To any ancestor

*Deu 1:11 'May the LORD, **the God of your fathers**, increase you*

*1Ki 15:11 Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like **David his father**.*

*Mat 3:9 and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, '**We have Abraham for our father**';*

*Mat 23:30 and say, 'If we had been living **in the days of our fathers**,*

Any ancestor is called "father" or "mother"

*Isa 51:2 "Look to Abraham **your father** And to Sarah*

"Fathers" mean elders:

*Act 7:2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and **fathers**!"*

*Act 22:1 "Brethren and **fathers**, hear my defence*

3. As an honorary title of respect and reverence to a chief, ruler, elder or older persons:

*Jdg 17:10 Micah then said to him, "Dwell with me and **be a father** and a priest to me,*

*1Sa 10:12 A man there said, "Now, **who is their father?**"*

*2Ki 2:12 Elisha saw it and cried out, "**My father, my father,***

*Luk 16:24 "And he cried out and said, '**Father Abraham,** have mercy on me,*

4. *As head or founder of a household, group, family, tribe or clan; the author or beginner of anything; a patriarch:*

*Gen 4:20 Adah gave birth to Jabel; **he was the father of those who dwell in tents and have livestock.***

*Gen 4:21 His brother's name was Jubal; **he was the father of all those who play the lyre and pipe.***

*Rom 4:12 and **the father of circumcision***

*Mar 11:10 Blessed is **the coming kingdom of our father David**; Hosanna in the highest!"*

*Luk 1:32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and **the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David**;*

*Luk 1:73 The oath which He swore **to Abraham our father,***

*Joh 4:12 "You are **not greater than our father Jacob,***

5. *Figuratively in a spiritual and moral sense:*

*Gen 17:4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And **you will be the father of a multitude of nations.***

*Gen 17:5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I have **made you the father of a multitude of nations.***

*Rom 4:11 and he received the sign of circumcision, ...so that he **might be the father of all who believe** without being circumcised,*

*Rom 4:12 and **the father of circumcision ...of our father Abraham***

*Rom 4:16 ...but also to those who are of the faith of **Abraham, who is the father of us all,***

6. *Of one who stands in a father's place and looks after another in a paternal way and/or of a teacher who exercises paternal care, authority and affection(not the same as a mere title of honour, which the Lord prohibited, but someone to whom pupils trace back the knowledge and training they have received):*

*1Co 4:15 For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers, for **in Christ Jesus I became your father** through the gospel.*

*Mat 23:9 "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for **One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***

*Php 2:22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel **like a child serving his father.***

*1Th 2:11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you **as a father would his own children,***

7. *God is called the Father of all believers - those who through Christ have been exalted to a specially close and intimate relationship with God, and who no longer dread him as a stern judge of sinners, but revere him as their reconciled and loving Father:*

Jesus inaugurated the way of addressing God as Father. I think this came as a shock to the disciples for they were not accustomed to approaching God as Father.

Mat 6:6 "But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray **to your Father** who is in secret, and **your Father** who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Mat 6:8 "So do not be like them; for **your Father** knows what you need before you ask Him.

Mat 6:9 "Pray, then, in this way: '**Our Father** who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Other Scriptures confirming God is our Father

Mat 6:26 "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet **your heavenly Father** feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

Rom 1:7 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ

1Co 1:3 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ..

Gal 1:3 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ,

Gal 1:4 who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of **our God and Father**,

Eph 1:2 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Col 1:2 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Php 1:2 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.

*Php 4:20 Now to **our God and Father** be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

*1Th 3:11 Now may **our God and Father** Himself and Jesus our Lord direct our way to you;*

*2Th 2:16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and **God our Father**,*

*Phm 1:3 Grace to you and peace from **God our Father** and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Jas 3:9 With it we bless **our Lord and Father**,*

Some more Scriptures confirming that God is our Father and that we are His children (His sons and daughters; His offspring)

*Joh 1:12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name,*

*Act 17:28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, '**For we are also His offspring.**'*

2Co 6:16 And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them I will be their God, and they shall be my people"

*2Co 6:18 "**I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.**"*

*1Co 8:6 yet for us there is but **one God, the Father**, from whom are all things and **we exist for Him**; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him.*

*Rom 8:15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a **spirit of adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "**Abba! Father!**"*

*Rom 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that **we are children of God**,*

*Gal 4:6 Because **you are sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "**Abba! Father!**"*

*Gal 4:7 Therefore you are **no longer a slave, but a son**; and if a son, then an heir through God.*

*Eph 2:18 for through Him we both have our **access in one Spirit to the Father**.*

*Eph 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and **are of God's household**,*

*Eph 4:6 **one God and Father** of all who is over all and through all and in all.*

*1Jn 2:23 Whoever denies the Son **does not have the Father**; the **one who confesses the Son has the Father also**.*

*1Jn 2:1 My **little children**, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an **Advocate with the Father**, Jesus Christ the righteous;*

*1Jn 3:1 See how great a **love the Father has bestowed on us**, that we would be called **children of God**; and **such we are**.*

*Heb 12:9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be **subject to the Father of spirits**, and live?*

[My spirit man has been born from above and that is why God (who is a Spirit) is called the Father of my spirit]

King David also called God "my Father"

Psa 89:26 "He will cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.'

8. *God is called the Father of Jesus Christ in respect to that particular relation in which Christ is the Son of God. That makes Jesus my brother!*

Scriptures indicating that God is the Father of Jesus Christ

Mar 1:11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Heb 1:5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: "you are my Son, today I have begotten you"? And again: "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son"?

Rom_ 15:6 so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2Co_ 11:31 The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, He who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying.

Eph_ 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Col 1:3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,

1Pe_ 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Some Scriptures where the Father and the Son are expressly distinguished

Mat 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

Mat 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

*Joh 3:35 "The **Father** loves the **Son** and has given all things into His hand.*

*Joh 5:26 "For just as the **Father** has life in Himself, even so He gave to the **Son** also to have life in Himself;*

*1Jn 4:14 We have seen and testify that the **Father** has sent the **Son** to be the Savior of the world.*

*2Jn 1:3 Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from **God the Father** and from **Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father**, in truth and love.*

Jesus calls God "pater mou", "my Father"

*Mat 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by **My Father**;*

*Luk 2:49 And He said to them, "Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in **My Father's** house?"*

*Joh 10:18This commandment I received from **My Father**.*

*Joh 10:25 Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in **My Father's** name, these testify of Me.*

*Joh 10:29 "**My Father**, who has given them to Me,*

*Rev 2:27 as I also have received authority from **My Father***

*Rev 3:5 and I will confess his name before **My Father***

Christ never associated Himself with His disciples by using the personal pronoun "our Father" - He always used the singular, "My Father," because His relationship with His Heavenly Father is unoriginated and essential, whereas theirs is by grace and regeneration.

The Lord Jesus is designated the Son, not only in His incarnation but in His eternal, infinite, self-existence

Scripture where Jesus is indicated as our brother

*Heb 2:11 For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason **He is not ashamed to call them brethren**,*

*Heb 2:12 saying: "**I will declare your name to my brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to you.**"*

9. **Of God, as the "Father of lights"; the "Father of mercies" and the "Father of glory":**

The word Father here is used in a sense as denoting that which is the source of anything, or that from which anything proceeds.

The "Father of lights":

*Jas 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from **the Father of lights**, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*

God is "*the* Father of the lights," as being the Creator, Source, Giver, Fountain and Maintainer of all light.

God is often represented as light in the Bible signifying wisdom, knowledge, purity, happiness, insight and understanding.

Light is also the emblem of the energy of God

The "Father of mercies":

*2Co 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of mercies** and God of all comfort,*

Mercy proceeds from God, He is the source of it, and it is his nature to impart mercy and compassion

It is one of God's special and glorious attributes that he produces consolation and mercy.

The plural number is used here:

Partly to show that God is exceeding merciful; He delights in showing mercy, and is rich and plenteous in the exercise of it

And partly to express the multitude of his tender mercies, of which he is the "Father", author, and giver, both in a temporal and spiritual sense; for there are not only innumerable providential mercies which the people of God share in, and partake of, but also a multitude of spiritual mercies.

The "Father of glory":

*Eph 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, **the Father of glory**, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*

The Father of glory; or "**the glorious Father**", who is glorious in Himself, in the perfections of His nature, and in the works of His hands! God is glory and all glory originates from Him.

The glory of God is His unchanging essence. It is the nature and acts of God in self-manifestation, i.e., what He essentially is and does, as exhibited in whatever way he reveals Himself in these respects, and particularly in the person of Christ, in whom essentially His "glory" has ever shone forth and ever will do.

God is the Father to whom *the* glory belongs - the Father who is worthy to be praised and honoured

As a Father, God is a glorious Father to Christ and also a glorious Father to the saints, to whom he has shown inexpressible love, by adopting them into His family; and pities them, as a father does his children; takes care of them, and protects them, and makes a glorious provision for them; not only of good things now, but of an eternal inheritance hereafter.

He is indeed the author and giver of eternal glory and happiness and thus all glory is due unto Him.

10. **Of God generally as the Creator, Preserver, Governor of all men and things, watching over them with paternal love and care:**

Thus in the New Testament God is called Father.

1. of the stars, the heavenly luminaries, because he is their creator, upholder and ruler
2. of all rational and intelligent beings, whether angels or men, because he is their creator, preserver, guardian and protector

1. **Of Satan as the father of wicked and depraved men; He is the model, whom sinners resemble, i.e., they have like evil character:**

*Joh 8:38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with **your father**."*

*Joh 8:41 You do the **deeds of your father**."*

*Joh 8:44 **You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (NKJV)***

*Act 13:10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you **son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness,***

1. TWO SEEMINGLY CONTRADICTING STATEMENTS ABOUT FATHERHOOD

How can we reconcile the statement made by Jesus in Matthew 23:9 with the statement that Paul made in 1 Corinthians 4:15?

- **What Jesus is saying:**

*Mat 23:9 **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***

- **What Paul is saying:**

*1Co 4:15 After all, though you should have ten thousand teachers (guides to direct you) in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers. **For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the glad tidings (the Gospel) (AMP)***

(NKJV translation: "for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel")

*1Co 4:16 So I urge and implore you, **be imitators of me (AMP)***

- **Let's first look at the statement of Jesus recorded in Matthew 23:9**

*Mat 23:9 **Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven.***

God is called the Father of all believers!

The Bible is very clear about this - we have but one Spiritual Father! God is our Father!

Refer to Point 7 under “The title and concept of “Father” is applied as follows” for all the Scriptures confirming that God is our Father and that we are His children; His sons and daughters; His offspring

Jesus said “and call no man your Father” (Mat 23:9)

Christ obviously excludes our earthly fathers here (Compare Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4 and Ephesians 6:1-3)

Jesus is using the word “father” here as meaning “authority, eminence, superiority, a right to command, and a claim to particular honour and respect” and in this sense, it belongs exclusively to God, and should not be ascribed to people.

All believers are equal – not one is above the other. Only God has supreme authority.

The Jewish teachers coveted that title because they seem to have supposed that a teacher formed the man, or gave him real life, and sought, therefore, to be called father. Christ is teaching them that the source of all life and truth was God, and they should not seek or receive a title which properly belongs to Him.

God is called the Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that makes Jesus my brother!

Refer to Point 8 under “The title and concept of “Father” is applied as follows” for Scriptures relating to this

Christ came to reveal God the Father to us

It is worthy to note that:

Whereas the everlasting power and divinity of God are manifest in creation, His "Fatherhood" in spiritual relationship is only revealed in the New Testament when His own Son, Jesus Christ was made manifest on the earth.

Isa 9:6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Isa 9:7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

*Mat 11:27 "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and **no one knows the Son except the Father**; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and **anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him**.*

*Joh 1:18 No man has ever seen God at any time; the only unique Son, or the only begotten God, Who is in the bosom [in the intimate presence] of the Father, **He has declared Him [He has revealed Him and brought Him out where He can be seen; He has interpreted Him and He has made Him known]**. (AMP)*

*Joh 17:25 "O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, **yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me**;*

Joh 17:26 and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

This spiritual relationship of God being our Father is not universal:

*Joh 8:42 Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father, you would love Me**, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me.*

*Gal 3:26 For **you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus**.*

The Son, Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the radiance of Gods glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by the word of His power

*Heb 1:2 in these last days has spoken to us in **His Son**, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.*

*Heb 1:3 And **He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature**, and upholds all things by the word of His power.*

*Col 1:15 **He is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation.*

"Exact representation" occurs only once in the book of Hebrews in the New Testament.

It is Gods Son who radiates Gods glory because He shares Gods nature and essence. Whatever God is in his character and nature Jesus is the exact representation.

Thus God's revelation of Himself is no longer fragmentary and incomplete as in Old Testament times – in and through Jesus the Son, the revelation of the Father is full and complete. Because Christ Jesus is supreme over all things, God's Word through Him is full, final and complete and transcends all previous words by God [old covenant]. Christ is the only source of eternal salvation and the only mediator between God and mankind – not a spiritual father.

○ **Secondly, a look at the statement by Paul recorded in 1 Corinthians 4:15-16**

Paul was not appointed or called as a father – he attained spiritual fatherhood through hardship and suffering.

He is writing to a church which is deeply divided, fleshly and immature.

*1Co 4:9 For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for **we have been made a spectacle** to the world, both to angels and to men.*

*1Co 4:10 **We are fools** for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ! **We are weak**, but you are strong! You are distinguished, but **we are dishonoured!***

*1Co 4:11 To the present hour **we both hunger and thirst**, and **we are poorly clothed**, and **beaten**, and **homeless**.*

*1Co 4:12 And **we labour**, working with our own hands. **Being reviled**, we **bless**; **being persecuted**, we **endure**;*

*1Co 4:13 **being defamed**, we **entreat**. We have been made **as the filth of the world**, the **offscouring of all things** until now.*

1Co 4:14 I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you.

1Co 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.

*1Co 4:16 Therefore I **urge you**, **imitate me**. (NKJV)*

1Co 4:15 After all, though you should have ten thousand teachers (guides to direct you) in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the glad tidings (the Gospel)

*1Co 4:16 So I **urge** and **implore** you, **be imitators of me** (AMP)*

Paul is not criticizing and discrediting instructors (teachers), but I believe he was reminded of the words of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 10:24 “a disciple is not above his teacher, nor is a servant or slave above his master”.

Jesus was referring to the fact that a teacher (instructor) will not allow his disciple to grow and develop beyond himself, whereas a true father rejoices at the growth and achievements of his children. A father's greatest joy is to see his children excelling him.

- ***"Instructors – teachers":***

One can understand the statement of Paul only when you understand the meaning of the word "instructor – teacher" in this context.

Instructors - teachers are **"guides to direct children"**

Paul is saying to this church: you have many "guides who direct and treat you as children", telling you what is wrong and what is right – what to do and what not to do.

Many times teachers (instructors) will steer you in directions of their own desires and insight which might not be in accordance with the plan of God for your life.

Such actions will hamper spiritual growth. You need people who will love you as a father and take care of you, who understand your true needs and who will create an environment where you will be able to grow and develop beyond them.

I remember in my own life when I became a father (physically), I was so infused with the drive to make sure my children achieve way more than I did in my lifetime. A true father rejoices when his child excels and become better than him.

- ***"Begotten" or "became your father":***

A closer look at the meaning of the word "begotten" or "became your father" will give us a greater understanding of what Paul is actually saying:

1 Corinthians 4:15 "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel."

Another translation reads like this:

For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel (ESV)

Begotten - means:

"Begotten" does not mean "men only begetting children", but men begetting children and raising them, taking care of all their needs and taking them to maturity (to adulthood) – to a point where they can take responsibility of their own lives

Paul is saying here: I brought you the Gospel of Jesus Christ- you became children of God and I never walked away from you. I took spiritual responsibility over you and through spiritual impartation, I am taking you to maturity so that you can reach your destiny.

Now I urge you – become like me – become spiritual fathers yourself and take responsibility over your own life and of those of others.

- ***"Imitate me":***

When Paul says "imitate me", he is not telling them to follow him per se, but rather that they should submit to Jesus Christ just as he had submitted to Jesus Christ.

Paul completes that phrase, “imitate me as I imitate Christ.” In 1 Corinthians 11:1

1Co 11:1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.

Paul re-iterates the immense responsibility that rests on the shoulders of mature believers in Romans 14:18-19 and 15:1-2 & 7 (Romans 14:1-23 and Romans 15:1-10 elaborates extensively on this subject)

Rom 14:18 He who serves Christ in this way is acceptable and pleasing to God and is approved by men.

Rom 14:19 So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual upbuilding (edification and development) of one another.

Rom 15:1 WE WHO are strong ought to bear with the failings and the frailties and the tender scruples of the weak; and not to please ourselves.

Rom 15:2 Let each one of us make it a practice to please his neighbour for his good and for his true welfare, to edify him [to strengthen him and build him up spiritually].(AMP)

Rom 15:7 Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

- ***To summarize the above and to reconcile the two statements of Jesus and Paul:***

God as our only Father has given us His "Father" heart, not so that we can be called father, but for us to reveal His Fatherly heart of love and compassion to others!!

This is what spiritual fatherhood is all about.

1. **RECONCILIATION AND THE RESTORATION OF RELATIONSHIPS IS AT THE HEART OF A SPIRITUAL FATHER:**

- A closer look at a very significant prophecy in the Old Testament and how it is fulfilled in the New Testament:

*Mal 4:5 "Behold, I am going to **send you Elijah** the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.*

Mal 4:6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

Elijah was the personification of the Old Testament prophetic working which focussed on exposing the sin and wrongdoings of the people of God and pointing them to the coming Messiah. Through this powerful prophecy of Malachi, God is telling us that there will come a time (before the "coming of the day of the Lord", i.e. the day and time that Jesus will make His appearance on this earth*) that the prophetic will no longer focus on the revealing of sin, but on the restoration of relationships (reconciliation flowing from the finished work of Jesus Christ) – *"the hearts of the fathers will be reconciled to the hearts of the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers"*.

- The expression *"the day of the Lord"* signifies a time where something dramatic and significant will happen which will have a tremendous effect on mankind

The reason why reference is made to Elijah in this prophecy and not to one of the other prophets is that Elijah is the one prophet in the Bible who imparted everything that he had to a younger prophet, Elisha. Elijah understood the principle of spiritual fatherhood and was accordingly called "my father" by Elisha!

The story of this intimate **relationship between Elijah and Elisha** is described in 2 Kings 1-14

2Ki 2:1 And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

*2Ki 2:2 **Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."** So they went down to Bethel.*

2Ki 2:3 Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he said, "Yes, I know; be still."

*2Ki 2:4 **Elijah said to him, "Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."** So they came to Jericho.*

2Ki 2:5 The sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, "Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be still."

*2Ki 2:6 Then **Elijah said to him, "Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." And he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."** So the two of them went on*

2Ki 2:7 Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.

2Ki 2:8 Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

*2Ki 2:9 When they had crossed over, **Elijah said to Elisha, "Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you." And Elisha said, "Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me."***

2Ki 2:10 He said, "You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so."

*2Ki 2:11 **As they were going along and talking**, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.*

*2Ki 2:12 **Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!"** And he saw Elijah no more. Then he took hold of his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.*

2Ki 2:13 He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan.

*2Ki 2:14 **He took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him and struck the waters and said, "Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here and there; and Elisha crossed over.***

Elisha, who addresses Elijah as “my father, my father” in Verse 12, was very persistent not to leave Elijah and that resulted in a wonderful impartation into his life – a double portion of Elijah’s spirit came upon him. Here we find an excellent example of impartation through proper relationship.

It is recorded that seven miracles occurred in Elijah’s ministry while fourteen miracles happened during Elisha’s ministry – indeed a double portion.

- **This prophecy of Malachi came to fulfilment when John the Baptist was born**

*Luk 1:5 In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a **priest named Zacharias**, of the division of Abijah; and **he had a wife** from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was **Elizabeth**.*

*Luk 1:7 But **they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren**, and they were both advanced in years.*

*Luk 1:8 Now it happened that **while he was performing his priestly service** before God in the appointed order of his division,*

Luk 1:11 an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.

Luk 1:13 ...the angel said to him, " Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.

Luk 1:16 "And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

Luk 1:17 " It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

John the Baptist was the last of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus endorsed him as the promise of Malachi:

Mat 11:13 "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John.

Mat 11:14 "And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come.

Mat 17:10 And His disciples asked Him, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

Mat 17:11 And He answered and said, "Elijah is coming and will restore all things;

Mat 17:12 but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands."

Mat 17:13 Then the disciples understood that He had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Jesus made the statement that John the Baptist was the greatest prophet ever – WHY?

Because all the Old Testament prophets pointed to Christ, but John was the one who introduced Jesus to the world.

Jesus also said that the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John – WHY?

Because John introduced Jesus Christ to the world, **but the Son of God lives within us**

Luk 7:28 "I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."

*Joh 1:29 The next day **he saw Jesus** coming to him and said, "**Behold, the Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!*

*Col 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, **which is Christ in you**, the hope of glory.*

The beheading of John the Baptist signified the end of the Old Testament prophetic working. Jesus Christ sealed the end of the old system with His outcry on the cross "it is finished".

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, a new prophetic working was inaugurated

*Act 2:17 'and it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of my Spirit on all flesh; **your sons and your daughters shall prophesy**, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

*Act 2:18 and on my menservants and on my maidservants I will pour out my spirit in those days; and **they shall prophesy**.*

Whereas the Old Testament prophets prophesied ABOUT Christ and His coming, New Testament prophetic activities FLOW FROM Christ and His finished work.

Rev 19:10 Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he ^{}said to me, "Do not do that;worship God. **For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**"*

(For the substance (essence) of the truth revealed by Jesus is the spirit of all prophecy – is the vital breath, the inspiration of all divine revelation)

The prophetic activities flowing from Christ are pivotal in the restoration of relationship and the establishing of true spiritual fatherhood

*2Co 5:18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**,*

*2Co 5:19 namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and **He has committed to us the word of reconciliation**.*

Only mature believers (spiritual fathers) can effectively flow in the ministry and word of reconciliation!!

- The prophecy in Malachi 4:6 has also a **negative side** attached to it which makes this whole issue of spiritual fatherhood a very serious matter

Mal 4:6 "He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse."

God says there will be no spiritual prosperity and growth unless there is spiritual reconciliation. God cannot bless where there is strife and division and it is the responsibility of spiritual fathers to initiate forgiveness and reconciliation. A child does not possess the ability to restore relationships – only mature believers (by implications spiritual father) do!

1. FURTHER ELABORATION ON SPIRITUAL FATHERHOOD

- The apostle John on spiritual fatherhood:

John made two great statements about the essence and being of God – ***God is light*** (1 John 1:5) and ***God is love*** (1 John 4:8)

The meaning of the word “is” in these two Scriptures is the following:

“To be”; “to exist” and ***“the reason for existence”***

So John is clearly telling us that the reason why God exists is to practically express and reveal the essence of His being, i.e. **“love”** to and through us. God did just that when He revealed His Father heart of love through His Son, Jesus Christ.

One of the main reasons why God has revealed to us His "Father" heart of love was not for us to be called father but to reveal His heart through us to others!!

1 John 2 is a great chapter where the father heart of the apostle John is revealed. His affection and tenderness can be seen in the way he addresses God’s people as “my little children” (1 John 2:1, 12 & 13).

Then he goes on and addresses the spiritual fathers commending them for their spiritual maturity

*1Jn 2:13 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.*

*1Jn 2:14 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.*

Fathers in the above context indicate:

Age and authority

People who have knowledge of the Heavenly Father through experience and an intimate relationship

Mature believers with long and rich experience of the love and grace of Father God which He exhibited in and through Jesus Christ (*you have come to know and still know*)

○ **Furthermore:**

God's fatherhood is the ground and pattern for human fatherhood.

Abraham was "father of nations," both by natural descent from him and by spiritual fellowship in his faith

*Gen 18:18 since **Abraham will surely become a great and mighty nation**, and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?*

*Rom 4:16 For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, **but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all**,*

*Rom 4:17 (as it is written, "**a father of many nations have I made you**") in the presence of Him whom he believed,*

Gal 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

Some more interesting facts:

A father is someone who produces more than he can consume, while a child is someone who consumes more than he/she can produce

Fatherhood (which is by the way – genderless) is about taking responsibility over my own life and destiny and over those of other people.

Spiritual fatherhood is about feeling the pain and joy of other people and to be there for them without expecting anything in return.

It is about imparting to others what you have received from the Lord and rejoicing in their spiritual growth.

Spiritual fatherhood is about exhibiting and portraying the love of God in whatever practical way possible

Fatherhood is not a single act but an on-going, lifelong process. A true Spirit-filled father (New Testament *elder*) will not seek his own gain in anything, but always the welfare and the good of believers entrusted to his/her care.

Paul did not expect respect or even submission from others. He only sought their spiritual growth and he urged the elders to do the same when he wrote to them in Acts 20:28

*Act 20:28 Therefore **take heed to yourselves and to all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*

Peter shares the feeling and attitude of Paul

*1Pe 5:2 **Shepherd the flock of God** which is among you, **serving** as overseers, not by compulsion but **willingly**, not for dishonest gain but **eagerly**;*

*1Pe 5:3 **nor as being lords** over those entrusted to you, but **being examples** to the flock;*

As a family of God and members of one body in Christ, we should have equal concern for each other.

1. TO CONCLUDE:

Why do we (Averille and I) embrace the true Biblical concept of “fatherhood” so deeply?

We believe it is the only way through which proper impartation could take place. By building genuine relationships with people and groups of people we become acquainted with their hurts, their desires and needs and wants, and we can at least start praying and interceding for them. In our walk with God there was a time that we experienced so much hardship and suffering and lack. Thank God, this did not make us “bitter” but “better. Today we can identify with people who are struggling and we can come alongside them, imparting unto them how God sustained us and cared for us.

God gave us so much insight, understanding and wisdom regarding purpose, destiny and vision and it is our greatest pleasure to share this with other people, without expecting anything in return. I believe this is what spiritual fatherhood is about – pouring out your whole life into other people’s lives without expecting to be rewarded.

As a result of this “fatherhood attitude” we have seen so many lives changed, churches been impacted and business turned around.

This is the only way we can make the world a better place to live in.

I want to challenge you to practice being imitators of Paul with regard to spiritual fatherhood in your own life and life of others.

You are blessed to be a blessing

Compiled by: Deon Gerber
[God's Word](#)