

# ▶ Becoming Spiritual Fathers



by Dan Schaffer

In our last newsletter we looked at God's mission for the church, for men, and for women as found in Ephesians 4:11-13. It is clear that God's primary mission for the church is to use the power of Christ to bring His people to maturity, unity, and Christ-likeness so that they can fulfill their primary calling to reproduce spiritual children.

In this newsletter we will take a much deeper look at the role of spiritual fathering and the level of maturity it requires.

In the second chapter of 1 John, within his address to his readers, John gives a significant description of three different levels of spiritual maturity. Throughout the letter, he consistently refers to the readers as "dear children." However, here he takes a noticeable departure from his standard address. This particular statement within the body of the letter not only has a rich message to its readers, it is repeated. In the Greek and Hebrew culture, repetition was used to show emphasis: the writer was saying, "This is important, pay attention." So, we will take a closer look at this message to see what John had to say to his contemporaries as well as to us, the readers of today.

In verse 12, John starts by saying, "I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name." He continues, "I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning." He ends with, "I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one." In differentiating the addressees, John distinguishes differences in levels of maturity among believers.

We can summarize the definitions as they apply to spiritual maturity this way: *children* have come to a saving knowledge of Christ; *young men* are strong in the Word of God and have successfully fought the spiritual battle; and *fathers* have known and have intimately experienced a deep relationship with the fullness of God. I believe that God is revealing here a key element of being a spiritual father.

We must mature from children who have experienced salvation, to young men who know the Word of God and can wage the spiritual battle, to fathers who have also walked with God over a significant period of time and have been used to reproduce the next generation of spiritual fathers. Those we define as fathers have known the eternal God for a significant amount of time; however, if they are not reproducing spiritually, they have stopped short in experiencing and practicing full spiritual maturity.

In the church, we often replace the fathers with the young men. We rush the process and evaluate those who are knowledgeable in the Word and able to fight the battle as being fully mature. But, the truly mature must also have a history of a deep and intimate relationship with the Living God and must be reproducing spiritual children. Those walking the pathway behind them easily identify these "fathers."

What is a father to provide for his children? I believe spiritually, as well as biologically, fathers are to provide four things for their children:

1. Protection
2. Resources
3. Correction or discipline
4. Affirmation through the spoken word and touch

Let's look at each of these elements of fathering.

**Protection:** Just as children need different levels of protection to grow at different levels of maturity, so it is in the spiritual realm. Protection is not control. It is using our influence to provide a safe place for our spiritual children to learn and grow.

**Resources:** Just as biological children require various resources (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, etc.) throughout their lives, so spiritual children need varying amounts and different spiritual resources as they mature. As a father I am to watch, pray, and provide them with the appropriate tools needed to mature.

**Correction:** Children find security when there are expressed limits that demonstrate love and a communicated commitment of encouragement for their own good and positive growth.

**Affirmation:** One of the most damaging elements in anyone's life is a lack of affirmation as a person. It limits our growth and determines that we will live out our insecurities rather than our sense of personal value. God has granted us value as His children, and we can be confident in this truth.

Take a moment to answer a few probing questions: Are you a spiritual father? Do you have spiritual children? You can know for certain by John's criteria. Wherever you are in the process—a spiritual child, a spiritual young man, or a spiritual father—will you allow God to mature and use you to reproduce spiritual children and leave a legacy? God has called you to be a spiritual father. Don't miss the opportunity to participate in creating new life alongside your Heavenly Father.

## Spiritual Grandchildren

It was 14 years ago that Jim Campbell and Mark Cobler connected through a church ministry in Ottumwa, Iowa. "I immediately picked up that this was an extremely difficult time in Mark's life," said Jim. "I could tell Mark needed me to help him focus on 'being' a godly man before spending significant time on 'doing' for God."

Jim made the strong commitment to meet weekly and become a spiritual mentor in Mark's life. Their relationship continued to grow as the years went by. Jim said, "Mark needed somebody to

watch his back in the battles of life."

They became involved as Key Men-Ambassadors with Promise Keepers, and during this time Jim saw how vital their time together had been. He said, "God used me to help set Mark free. I could see that He had huge plans for Mark's life."

As Mark and Jim were introduced to Building Brothers, the year-long process seemed to give Mark the vehicle to significantly *(continued on reverse side)*

## Ministry Prayer & Praise:

- Phase I Training at Grace Chapel's men's retreat was a tremendous time for us as a ministry. How encouraging to see over 100 men soaking in this vital message.
- Please pray for the Facilitator Training taking place in July. Our desire is for leaders from around the country to be impacted to the point of making the building of spiritual fathers the foundation for their church.
- We need prayer for guidance and protection for each of us and our families.
- We ask that you pray for spiritual guidance for us, as a team, as we make deeper inroads into major denominations and see God use our message to impact church leadership around the world.

## Personal Prayer & Praise:

- Pray for Dan'l and the handful of pastor friends he has invited to the Facilitator Training and for an opportunity that has opened up with the Baptist General Conference. Also, continue to pray for Carla's health so they can have more ministry opportunities and fun together.
- Ken and Bonnie ask prayer for God's provision in their lives so Bonnie can be at home with Micah at his young age.
- Rick and Gretchen have sold their house to the first couple who saw it and are moving to West Denver. Pray for them for a quickly settling in to their new community and church.
- Dan and Jan ask for prayer in recouping from their three-week trip to Germany, and for God to prepare Dan for the ministry opportunities over the summer.

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Littleton, Colorado 80127



## ▶ Ministry Update

### ▶ **Building Brothers Board Meeting**

June 4-5, our board members will meet here in Denver. We have asked two pastors in this area to join the board. Please pray with us as we continue to seek, and desire, God's direction for this ministry.

### ▶ **Strasburg, Colorado**

June 26, representatives from Building Brothers will present Phase IV to the Strasburg Community Church. Pastor Dave Boswell attended the Facilitator Training in January and continues to be a strong advocate for Building Brothers in his church and the community.

### ▶ **Denver, Colorado**

July 10, Dan will present Phase II Training at Grace Chapel in Denver, Colorado. There are currently 66 men in Building Brothers groups—this includes eight pastors and four elders. We have heard some tremendous reports of Christ working deeply in the lives of these men.

### ▶ **Facilitator Training**

On **July 13-15**, the Building Brothers team will host an in-depth training of the four-phase process in Denver. We are encouraging pastors and church leaders to attend this three-day, extensive interaction time so that they can facilitate the process in their churches and communities. We look forward to a life, and ministry, changing experience for these leaders.

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build into the lives of men. During this time Mark was introduced to Brian "Bubba" Dowling. Mark started to talk with Bubba and dig into his life. "Bubba had a lot of deep wounds, but God used Mark to help heal them; Bubba quickly became a maturing believer with a heart to serve God," said Jim. Bubba now leads a group of young men through the year-long Building Brothers process. He continues on with a strong commitment and desire to mentor others. In fact, he has become one of the key building blocks in his church to continue this process forward in years to come.

"I clearly see that my job is not the 'out-front' leader, but rather one whose primary function is to mentor the leaders of tomorrow. God continues to lead me to those kinds of guys, helping them become everything they are intended to be, going beyond my abilities and reproducing themselves in others."



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