

BIBLICAL MENTORING /FATHERING

**A Significant Key In
Developing Large-
Capacity Leaders**

DUDLEY DANIEL

Written by Gordon Hunkin

Biblical Mentoring/Fathering

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Equipping For Apostolic Christianity

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Equipping For Apostolic Christianity

At the heart of **Apostolic Christianity** is a passion to be a Church that is determined to fulfil the commission given by Jesus to "make disciples of all nations." We do this by planting New Testament churches, training and releasing large-capacity leaders, and bringing the whole priesthood to a place of liberty and effectiveness.

Apostolic Christianity finds its expression through a Church that embraces the prophetic purposes of God in every age, a Church that has the ability to see the future as God sees it and prepares to become the future.

Apostolic Christianity has a God-inspired zeal to go and not to gather, to send and not to stay. This is a people who will give everything, without compromise, to be what God calls them to be and to do what God calls them to do.

Table Of Contents

Section One

Chapter 1	Fathering – An Introduction	Page 9
Chapter 2	An Apostolic Heart	Page 14
Chapter 3	Choosing A Team	Page 17
Chapter 4	Developing Team	Page 22
Chapter 5	Sons And Others	Page 31
Chapter 6	True Sons	Page 37

Section Two

Chapter 7	What Fathering Is Not	Page 44
Chapter 8	What Fathering Is – Part One	Page 51
Chapter 9	What Fathering Is – Part Two	Page 56
Chapter 10	What Fathering Is – Part Three	Page 60
Chapter 11	What Fathering Is – Part Four	Page 65
Chapter 12	What Fathering Is – Part Five	Page 70
Chapter 13	What Fathering Is – Part Six	Page 74
Chapter 14	What Fathering Is – Part Seven	Page 78

Conclusion		Page 85
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Section One

Chapter 1

Fathering – An Introduction

Fathering is one of the most important relationships, if not **the** most important, in all of life, both our spiritual life and our natural life. In this book we are going to look specifically at Biblical fathering. That does not refer simply to an environment in which people feel secure because they are getting something that they did not get from their own father. Neither is motivated solely by a desire for those we father to be blessed. Biblical fathering (or mentoring) has a deliberate purpose. It has vision.

God is my Father with a purpose. He loves me and He cares about my needs, but He is not motivated by my needs. He wants to make me more like Jesus and to make me more effective in His Kingdom. I believe that He wants me to do the same in my fathering towards others.

For me, true Biblical fathering has to do with the fashioning and forming of team. Those who father others well have a conscious intention to bring people to the place where they are part of a team. If not an ‘official’ team, then at least a part of some expression of team that is effective in fulfilling a God-given call, or task, even if that is an unofficial team.

Fathering is one of the most important relationships, if not the most important, in all of life.

While it will meet legitimate needs, Biblical fathering is not motivated by those needs. Biblical fathering will always result in people being released to fulfil their destiny. It is motivated to see others become something mighty in God.

Fathering then, is both relational and functional. Both aspects are essential to fathering, but I always put them in that order – relationship first and then function. Relationship is primary, but it is important to see that it is not only a relationship. There is also a specific function to fathering, and fathering is incomplete without that.

True fathering has to do with the fashioning and forming of team – a team that is effective in fulfilling a God-given call.

I find it extremely significant that God is constantly referred to as ‘Father’ in the Bible. To my mind, this indicates that a primary need, both in the world and in the Church, is for fathers who know how to father well. Unfortunately, there is very little good fathering taking place in the Church today. The fathering that does take place is mostly ineffective, unskilled, and often does not go far enough, or is motivated by the wrong things.

Related to this lack of good fathering is what I call a lack of ‘maleness’. A positive expression of godly maleness in church life, without which there can be no positive expression of fathering, has all but disappeared, and the Church is the poorer for it.

We live in a time where the ‘women’s liberation movement’ has had a tremendous effect in the world. Some of what that movement has addressed are legitimate issues, but the overall effect has not been good for us. This has even had a

negative effect in the church, which is evident in the absence of confident, godly maleness in church life.

One example of this is that since the 1980s, the songs we sing have become predominantly ‘feminine’. I find that there is very little powerful maleness in our times of corporate worship. Much of it is the ‘gentle Jesus, meek and mild’ type of worship, with new words, but with sentiments that are predominantly female. Please hear me on this. I love to sing songs that express the beauty and wonder of who Jesus is, but when I look back on the last decade or two, I feel this has been the predominant sentiment in worship – to the detriment of a good, healthy expression of ‘maleness’ in our worship.

This is one reason that I was thrilled, when I led a church in South Africa, by the prayer times that we had outside of the buildings on Wednesday nights. We would march and sing so loudly that people said they could hear us from up to a kilometre away. We sang songs that spoke of Jesus as a warrior, that declared that we were “armed and dangerous,” and proclaimed the certainty of the victory we have in warfare because of who Jesus is.

While some of that still comes through, the truth is that most of what we have today in our worship is predominantly feminine. Even some of the songs that have more of a ‘male’ sentiment have become too gentle in the way they are played, because the musicians have been trained in, or have grown up with, an approach to worship that is almost entirely ‘feminine’.

Whatever the other factors are that have had an influence in this, I think that it is a lack of fathering that is the root cause. The result of this lack of fathering is that all of society is sicker and poorer. In many ways, society has emasculated (‘de-maled’) men as it has become more feminine. Maleness needs to be restored, and one of the key factors in seeing that happen is for true fathering to be restored.

Let me say again: for me, true fathering, as seen in the Scripture, has to do with fashioning and forming team. In other words, there is a definite and significant motivation to fathering. When we take people aside to train them on these issues, we need to help them understand this, that true Biblical fathering has to do with fashioning and forming team, but with a godly expression of maleness.

Before we continue, we do need to acknowledge that there is some controversy that surrounds ‘fathering’ in the body. Much of this has come about because fathering has, at times, been misrepresented by those who have used the idea of fathering to rule others with a heavy hand.

There is also the fact that Jesus taught us, in Matthew 23:9, that we are not to call any man on earth ‘father’, and some may wonder, in the light of that, how we can even talk of fathering in a New Testament context. I think that we can, as long as we understand what Jesus was saying and make sure that we stay within the bounds of fathering as it is taught in the Scripture.

To begin with, we look at Paul’s references to being a father. He said to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 4:15) that in Christ Jesus he had become their father in the gospel. Did Paul contradict Jesus by calling himself a father? I do not think so. We do only have one Father, in heaven, who has the title of ‘Father’, but Paul did not give himself this as a title that set him above others. He used the term ‘father’ to refer to a relationship and a function, not as a title.

In Christ it is never a title, but there are many in traditional churches who violate this by using ‘father’ as a title. It is precisely this that Jesus told us not to do. That is not the same thing, however, as what happens when godly men have a fathering relationship and function toward others, as Paul did.

While this relationship of fathers and sons in the Kingdom is a very real and necessary one, we do have to understand

the difference between what Paul is speaking about, and the abuse that takes place in the name of fathering. My aim with this book is to contribute to understanding that as we examine the true nature of Biblical fathering.

We are looking for far more than an abstract idea or a theory though. We will be looking for those godly and practical ways to father others well that are found in Scripture. In order to find those, we will primarily be looking at many of the aspects of fathering as they are revealed in the life of Jesus. He is, after all, the best example of fathering that we have.

God the Father has not walked on the earth (as far as I know), but Jesus, His Son, has. He said to His disciples that if they had seen Him, then they had seen the Father. For that reason, if we want to know the Father and what He is like, we can look at what Jesus did.

Fathering is both relational and functional. Both aspects are essential to fathering.

Chapter 2

An Apostolic Heart

You cannot go out and do what I am talking about in this book unless you are called to be a father. In order to fashion and form a team that has an apostolic heart, even if that is an eldership team of a local church, you have to be convinced that God has called you to be a father in that context. The members of that team would also need to recognise that this is true.

There is an apostolic dimension to any team in the Bible, and **all** fathering in a Biblical context also has an apostolic element. In fact, according to the great commission in Matthew 28 and Acts 1:8, even a local eldership team would have to have an apostolic, or trans-local, element to it. Apostolic and trans-local are terms that refer, in part, to the work of the Kingdom that extends to the ends of the earth, a work that goes far beyond that which happens within a local church. The implication of that is that there is no room on such a team for a pastor who does not have an apostolic heart.

Having an apostolic heart is not the same thing as having an apostolic (or trans-local) call, which you would need to have if you are going to be able to father people apostolically, and not only father in the context of the local church, or an eldership team. I do not mean that you have to be an apostle if you are called to father people apostolically, but I do mean that there would be more than a 'local' anointing on your life.

I have fathered people apostolically, but I do not personally perceive myself to be an apostle, which may come as a shock to some. I cannot remember ever saying that I am an apostle. What I do say is that to **some** I am an apostle. Some people have said that I am fearful and unbelieving because I will not say that I am an apostle. I have never been concerned with that. When I consider Peter and Paul and what they did, then I know that I am certainly not anything like what they were.

There is an apostolic dimension to any team in the Bible.

Apostolic fathering can include the fathering of individuals (as Paul fathered Timothy, Titus and Onesimus) as well as the fathering of works (as Paul fathered certain churches). Not all who are fathers will do both. There are many who will never father a work, but who are still able to father people. As we read through the New Testament, we will notice that not all of the apostles were spiritual fathers in the way that Paul was. This is why not all of them were able to form an apostolic team.

The team I am part of is an Apostolic/Prophetic team, but that does not mean that the members of that team are all apostles or prophets; I do not feel that that is required of them. What I do feel is required is that all of those that are included on the team should be able to father people, even though they may not ever father a work.

Every man who leads a local church is a father to that work, which is a relational and functional role that he carries toward the people he pastors. There has, however, been some misunderstanding in Church circles as to who the father of a church is, which is why I make a distinction between those who are **‘a’** father and those who are **‘the’** father.

For example, I no longer lead the church that I planted in Bryanston, South Africa. When I left South Africa to take up the leadership of a church in Adelaide, Australia, I handed the leadership over to another. He has subsequently done the same. Both of those men have been, or are, ‘a’ father to that ‘work’, but I am still ‘the’ father of that work. Not in title and not the current father, but ‘the’ father historically because I planted that church. The person leading the church now is ‘a’ father to everyone in that church and perhaps the father to many of them, but I am **‘the’** father of the work.

That does not at all detract from the function of the man who currently leads the church, and it would be wrong for the members of that church to still refer to me as if I were carrying the relational and functional role of ‘father’ to that work right now. This is a function that only one person carries for the season that God calls him to do so. It would be wrong for anyone who is not the visionary elder of a church to father in the context of that church as if he were the current father of the work.

While only one person is the father of a local church in any given season, there may be others in that church who are able to father people; others who also have an apostolic heart and are able to impart that to others. There is nothing unbiblical about that. It is vital, though, that anyone who is ‘fathering’ people in a church makes sure that the current father of the church knows about that and agrees with what he is doing. The father of the work needs to be confident to release the person who is fathering others within that work to do so, and he must also be happy for him to father the specific people he will approach.

Generally it will be ‘fathers’ who will approach or choose ‘sons’. This is, however, always a two-way street, which means that the relationship and function is only real and valid if those who are being fathered enter into that relationship willingly.

Chapter 3

Choosing A Team

Every single thing that is done anywhere, anytime in the Kingdom should happen in a 'team' context. This is one of God's ways. He does not want anything to happen in an independent manner in His Kingdom.

Therefore, the first choice that has to be made with regard to team, is actually to choose to work in team rather than to work independently. We have to understand that God designed team for the good of His people – all of them. One of the most striking Biblical demonstrations of the value of team is when Moses appointed seventy elders to help him lead the people (Numbers 11:1-30). Leading God's people had become an enormous responsibility for him and he could not keep up with the demand. He had become so desperate that he actually asked God to take his life if that was the way it was always going to be.

Moses did not think of working with a team himself. His father-in-law saw how desperate he was with all that he had to do and suggested this as an answer to his problem. This team immediately lightened his load and enabled him to give his attention to the things that he should have been doing. We can learn, from this account, not to wait until we become desperate before we embrace the value of investing in what may seem to be the slow process of developing a team.

I remember listening to a friend tell of how he used to row as a sport. As I listened, I realised how important teamwork

is in that sport and how, in all the sports that had I played, I was never a team player. Whenever I got the ball I always wanted to be the star. That was why I excelled in Karate. It was not natural for me to be a team player. Some people seem to be natural team people; I was not.

All that has changed and now I love team. Somehow God took all that was an anti-team attitude out of me, and now team is as essential as breathing to me. I cannot imagine how anyone can not work in team.

Since God dealt with all that was in me that prevented me from being a team person, I can no longer do it any other way. That is why, when I hear of someone making decisions on his own, when he could have talked things through with others, I wonder why he will not work in team. By not doing so, I know that he has disadvantaged himself and those that he is called to lead. Most pastors today do not produce leaders and teams that function well because they do not see the value in investing in people and in team.

All of the time I spend fathering others is in the context of team. I do this with men that I have chosen to father, the same way that Jesus chose men from the multitude whom He wanted to be with Him. Notice that He chose some. He did not try to train the multitude. He preached to the multitude, but He spent more time training the twelve. This was a focus for Him.

“He appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” I love this passage from Mark 3:13-15, which tells us that Jesus wanted the twelve to be with Him and that they came to Him. This is significant because it shows us that He was not motivated chiefly by function, by the need to get something done. He was motivated by relationship. Jesus wanted to spend time with them.

If we do not see the importance of this we will not understand what He was doing. This was an investment that

He made by imparting His life into their lives. He wanted to be with them and they wanted to be with Him. It was a two-way thing, but it was initiated by Him. The disciples did not do the choosing; all they could do was accept or reject the invitation. They could not initiate it. This is a very important leadership principle with respect to fathering.

Jesus was not motivated chiefly by function, by the need to get something done. He was motivated by relationship.

This is the way that it is with Biblical fathers and sons. Generally fathers initiate this relationship with those they feel that they should father or mentor. Fathers choose the sons, but the ‘sons’ must want to be there. Verse 13 of the passage we have just mentioned tells us that the disciples wanted to be with Jesus. This is something that must be established from the outset with those we father; they must want to be there. There is no value in the process if they come reluctantly, or with the idea that if they ‘stick it out’ they can become something, be ‘promoted’, etc. If they do not want to be there it will not work, and a lot of time will be wasted on both sides.

It is important to remember that “*Jesus called to Him those **He** wanted.*” We have to get this into our hearts and never give in to people telling us that God told them that we are to spend time with them. Many have come to me in the past to tell me that God told them that I was going to mentor them. Unless I hear God tell me that, I really cannot give that kind of time to them, and I have to tell them so graciously.

There were times that God did speak to me about someone who was not an obvious choice. One of those was a man who

was in the music group. He did not want to be noticed and so he would position himself up against a wall, and he would not even look at the congregation when he played his guitar.

He was not the kind of person that you would naturally say was inspiring, or who you would want to take and give time to training and equipping. There were other men who were more inspiring, but God told me that I should spend time with him, which I did. Today he is highly regarded and respected by many. He preaches and teaches all over the world, and he is loved by my wife and me.

Generally fathers initiate this relationship with those they feel that they should father or mentor, but the ‘sons’ must want to be there.

When Jesus chose the twelve, we are told in verse 14 of the text we are discussing that “*He appointed twelve, designating them apostles.*” Why did He do that? The reason given is so important: “... *that they might be with Him.*” Just to be with Him. That was what He wanted them to respond to. The Scripture goes on to say that they did respond: “... *they came to him.*” Their mind-set was not one that was only prepared to give it a try and see how it went, and to keep their options open. They were in for the long haul, and they left whatever else they were involved with behind and came to be with Him.

There is no value in spending this type of time with people unless they are in it for the long haul. I remember how, in the early days of New Covenant Ministries International, there were many around the world who came because of what they

thought we could do for them as New Covenant Ministries International. They did not want to be with me though, and so I could not build with them. On the other hand, there were others who recognised something of God in what we were doing and who truly wanted relationship with us. Those men I could build with.

I am talking about these things in relation to fashioning team because the devil will try his best to waste your time, even by 'sending' you people who seem to have the potential for greatness, but whose hearts are not for you. I hope to save you years of wasted time and heartache. We have to work with people who are for us, and who have a conviction that this is what God wants for them.

Sometimes, when I have invited people to join me in a fathering forum, their response has been that they will **try** to get there. Some of those I invited to a time away in South Africa for five days responded by saying that they would see if they could make it. My response was to tell the person sending out the invitations to let those people know that the invitation was withdrawn.

I need more than that. I need to know that they are convinced that they should be there. Then, if God has confirmed in their hearts that they **should** be there, they should do more than **try** to be there. There is a place for 'try' but it is not at that level.

Chapter 4

Developing Team

When we look at how Jesus and the twelve disciples spent their time together, we see that it was often in a relaxed environment. We do not see session after session where He sat them down and formally taught them. They often simply sat around and spent relational time together.

We see them doing this at the Mount of Olives, at the Sea of Galilee, and we see indications of a genuine closeness with each other, such as John's resting his head on Jesus' chest. This was not because Jesus had nothing better to do, or was tired. It was because He understood the value of simply being together. He knew the value of His disciples seeing His way of life and 'catching' who He really was, and not only knowing who He said He was.

Why would Jesus ask, "Who do men say that I am?" Why did He not simply keep on telling them who He was and keep demonstrating His authority through signs and wonders? I believe it was because He wanted them to think, and to talk amongst themselves about who He really was. Through meaningful times of interacting with Jesus, His disciples did not merely hear who He said He was, they 'caught' who He was.

Think about the 'training' that you do. How much of that only comes through what you are saying? How much of it is time where the people you are training can get close to you and get to know who you really are? If we do not allow them

to get close to us, we will never produce good sons who can themselves become fathers and produce good sons. We have to see the value of spending this kind of time together, if we are ever to succeed in fathering others well.

I have often quoted something that I read about Billy Graham when I was in Bible College. He was asked whether he would do things the same way if he had his life to live over again. He answered that he would not. He said that he would find twelve men, as Jesus did, and spend time with them and hope that each of them would become what he was, and that each of them would also find twelve men and do the same.

Through meaningful times of interacting with Jesus, His disciples did not merely hear who He said He was, they ‘caught’ who He was.

Even though I did not know then what I know now, that statement by the man who was at that stage arguably the greatest soul-winner alive made a deep impact on me. I was an ‘evangelist’ in those days, and here was the person that I considered to be the greatest evangelist saying that he would change what he had done. He had come to understand, in retrospect, that there is great value in what is being passed on to others as you spend time with them.

The beauty of this principle is that we need not have only one group of twelve. We can have a few groups of twelve, depending on our availability. One group could meet on the first Saturday of the month, another on the second Saturday, and so on. I know that for some that kind of schedule may be impossible to keep up, but I merely want to show how this can be worked out, if we have the time available.

The idea is that we only invite a group to meet with us once we have a long-term plan in place, and then we work out how we can fit all of that in with our other commitments. What I do suggest, though, is that the group should meet together at least once a month.

The things that we do when we are together with this group should be relational. When Jesus was together with his disciples I am sure that there was some degree of lecturing, but it was definitely not all like that. Jesus let them ask questions, and He asked them questions. They did not simply work through a set of notes. We see that Jesus interacted with the twelve, asking them things and drawing answers out of them: We see Him asking things like, “What were you talking about on the road?” or, “Who do people say that I am?”

I know from the groups that I spend time with, that it is only when they finally break through the formal “business approach” and start asking questions that every one comes alive. They go home with a sense that they have had a great time of input, when in reality they were asking questions. What I try and do is to make sure that we have time to sit around together, to go for walks, to play and eat together. As that happens, we talk to each other. I talk to them and I answer their questions. That is how we are going to bring leaders through. Formal teaching may possibly make up 25 percent of it, but relational time must be what we give a priority to.

I did this a lot in the early days of forming the New Covenant Ministries International team and have been making ways to do that again more recently. Those who were part of these forums in those days were all different. Some were more secure than others and some of them had the idea that they always had to look different. Every time you saw them their hairstyle had changed.

People said to me that I was crazy to take men like that and bring them onto team with me. I saw something in

them though, and from the day they started relating to me I honestly wanted those men to go beyond me. This is what fathering, or mentoring, is all about.

What are you doing with the people that God gives you? I often hear pastors moaning about the people they have to work with. Look at what Jesus had to work with; a radical freedom fighter, a betrayer, one who forever doubted. Think about these men outside of the knowledge we have today of the final outcome of their lives. Are they the kind of people you would have wanted? Just think of that group before they became what Jesus knew they could become. That is why we need to take whoever we have available and ask God to help us to take them beyond where we are.

That is only going to happen if we spend time with them. Only a little bit of the transformation can happen in a classroom. The majority will take place as we sit and listen to their dreams, their hopes for the future, their fears, and as we help them to come through. There is no substitute for time spent together doing all that.

Fathering, or mentoring, is all about seeing those we father go beyond where we are.

Sometimes I would take the men that I was fathering on trips with me. We would sit on trains. We would sit around the back yard of the house where we were staying and we would talk. I would listen and I would answer questions. I would also give them opportunities to preach into the leadership contexts that I was ministering into. Then the day came when what we were involved in as New Covenant Ministries International became too big, and I could not take them with me as much anymore. In the last few years I have

been trying to redeem and retrieve some of what we have lost in this regard, but I simply cannot take them on trips with me anymore.

In a proper fathering time I do not lecture them on what I think they need, but I do set the tone. I ask them, one at a time, to tell us what their dream for their life is. I do not tell them beforehand what I am up to; I spring it on them.

Some may not even have a dream, and so that may be the first time that they have to come up with something like that. In this way they are prompted to think about this and to dream. Others may have a dream that is altogether different to what I thought they were planning for their lives.

I asked Rob Rufus to illustrate this at a time of training we had with some men on the South West Coast of Australia. I had not told him what I was doing; I simply asked him to share his dream with us. Even though I had not given him any warning, he stood up and it started pouring out of him. Even though I had known him for some time, I realised that I did not know the full dimensions of his dream.

The point is that a good father takes an interest in the dreams of his sons. In the first place he looks at them in order to see if they are achievable dreams. If they are, then he plans to make all the adjustments necessary in order to help them to achieve those dreams. If he sees that a dream is not achievable, then a good father will talk to them in private and help them to find a dream that is achievable.

When we hear someone we are fathering share a God-achievable dream, we make the necessary adjustments to any perceptions we have had of them in the past. Encourage them if it is achievable and help them to get there. It may be possible that once we have heard someone's dream, we will deal with him altogether differently than before when it comes to the fashioning and forming of the various aspects of his life.

That sometimes means that we no longer let them get away with things we may have in the past. The reason is that there is a strengthening, a fashioning and forming of character that is required to get them to where and what they want to be. That does not mean that we immediately launch a full attack on their weak points. We build relationally and take care to confront wisely. There will still be some pain related to this, but we have to bring them through that. The reward of seeing them come through and go on to do more than what we have done is far more important than the discomfort of confrontation.

A good father takes an interest in the dreams of his sons.

There were other things that Jesus did with the group that He chose that are important to grasp with respect to the way that He worked with them to see them released into what God was calling them to. Firstly, He gave them opportunity to ‘experiment’, or apply what He was teaching them. They had to go and apply the things that He was fashioning and forming in terms of their identity and ministry, and He created opportunities for this to be expressed.

This is an important part of bringing leaders through – giving them some kind of opportunity to apply what they are learning. Jesus did this with the twelve and with the seventy-two. He took a risk with them when He did so, but they had been with Him before He gave them an opportunity to try out what they had learned, and He sent them out with a mandate. When they come back rejoicing at the effect of their ministry, He brought adjustment and redirected them rather to rejoice because their names were written in the Book of Life (Luke 10:1-20).

Another important aspect of fathering that is highlighted in Mark 3:13-15 is that He gave them authority. When Jesus delegates authority, He gives us **His** authority. That applies to us as we father others. We have the authority that Jesus delegated to us and that enables us to delegate authority to our sons. As we do so, we need to encourage them to exercise this confidently. They do not need to apologise for being who they are, because their being there is as if it were the same as our being there.

What is not helpful is when we only give them responsibility and no authority, which is what we often do. When we are fathering well, we will take risks by giving them authority, and by doing so we express a level of trust in them to do the right thing, even when they may not always do so. In the ongoing process of fathering, the bad decisions that they do make can be cleared up, and we can make sure that they do not make the same mistake again.

When I asked people to come onto team with me, they knew that would mean carrying a large responsibility, but I also let them know that it also meant that they would have the appropriate authority to do what was required, and to make the decisions that were associated with the task. At times this is not clearly understood by those who are on team with us. Sometimes, in their deep desire not to dishonour us as a team, they will contact me before making decisions that they could have made on their own. While they have a pure-hearted motive not to make a decision that is a poor reflection on the team, the authority that has been given can be undermined in the eyes of others because these men keep referring to me before they make decisions.

There are times when it is right to consult, but there are many times when they simply need to exercise the authority that they have and make the decisions they are responsible for making. I trust them to do the right thing, but if they do

make mistakes, then we will work together to put matters right. We have to take some risks in fathering.

Many teach that we should first give responsibility and then only later delegate any authority, but I cannot find any examples of that in Scripture. We may not give the people the same amount of authority that we will a year later, but we have to give them some authority if we want to give them responsibility. They have to have some authority in order to make decisions related to the responsibility that we give them.

Jesus gave those He was training opportunity to ‘experiment’, and He also gave them authority.

To only make them responsible (without giving them the appropriate authority) is too heavy a burden for any person. That is how we will kill motivation and gifting, and I personally believe that it will also kill anointing.

The passage from Exodus 18:21-24 that tells of Moses appointing elders to help him teaches us a few important things to look for in those that we want to give responsibility and authority to. They should have a few vital characteristics. One of these is that they are capable. In other words, we do not give authority to those who do not have the ability or skill to carry that authority.

Since we are going to give them authority, we need to know that they fear God. We also need to know that they are trustworthy. Paul picks up on this in 2 Timothy 2:2 where he talks about faithful men. They also need to be people who hate dishonest gain.

This passage also talks of what they should do with the trust that is given to them. Firstly they are to serve. The men

Moses appointed were to handle most of the issues that needed attention and they were to do so in a faithful and responsible manner. They were to bring only the difficult cases to Moses. Their purpose was to help the people and to help Moses – to help him carry the load.

The result was that it made everyone's task easier and that it was possible to send everyone away satisfied that their problem or request had been well handled. Once we have brought those we are fathering through, we can expect the same sort of result.

Chapter 5

Sons And Others

People have often been told that the person who leads them to Christ is their spiritual father. Even though they know that, for the most part there is no reality to this relationship. Many expect very little from this relationship in the first place, because they have had a bad relationship with their natural father, and they simply accept it as something that is perpetuated in Christ. The truth is, however, that a father/son relationship is not necessarily established between you and the person who leads you to Christ.

On the contrary, the person who introduces you to Christ will generally not be your spiritual father. If that were the case, then there would be thousands of fathers, and some fathers would have thousands of 'children'. This would never work.

For instance, how could Billy Graham ever be father to the multitudes that he has led to Christ? There is no way that he could give ongoing meaning to that role. Fatherhood, for it to be genuine, must have relational reality.

Every believer can, like Billy Graham, bring others to Christ in the same way that midwives bring a baby to the point of birth. It is, however, only God who can give them birth through regeneration by His Spirit. Working with God to bring people to the point of regeneration is not the same thing as fathering them.

In the New Testament, fathering has to do with raising up spiritual family, and spiritual sons recognise fathers on this basis. Timothy came to know Christ long before he met Paul, and yet Paul clearly considered Timothy to be a son to him. That was the nature of their relationship.

In the Old Testament you have an example of this with Eli and Samuel (1 Samuel 3:6). In 2 King 2:12 we see the same thing with Elijah and Elisha, where Elisha refers to Elijah as his father. Besides Timothy, Paul also addresses Titus and Onesimus as his 'sons in the gospel' (1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 10). Paul was a father to churches as well as to individuals, though, and we see this in the way in which Paul sees his relationship with the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 4:14-17).

So far we have established that fathering is both relational and functional; it is intent on raising up family; and all true fathering will involve the fashioning and forming of team. This does not mean, though, that everyone on a team is going to be a true son to the person who leads that team.

In the New Testament, fathering has to do with raising up spiritual family, and spiritual sons recognise fathers on this basis.

Sons are those who carry the 'family genes'. This is particularly vital when we look at who it is that will succeed the team leader. True success in fathering, for me, lies in begetting or producing sons who can be successors, those who are able to take over from the father, even if they are never in a position to do so, or the opportunity never arises for them to do so.

Sons also follow the father's value system. Remember how Paul wrote to Timothy about modelling his way of life on what he saw in Paul's way of life, and then teaching that to others (2 Timothy 2:2)? Sons do not go off and try and do things in a 'better way'. They do what they do within the value system of the father, although still within their own unique personality and gifting.

There are also a number of dynamics that can exist on any given team that are not characteristic of true sonship. For example, there may be some who are on a team who are only servants. They are undoubtedly servants of God, and they work within the team as servants, but they never become a son to the leader of the team. The reason for this is often because, although they have an anointing, gifting, a definite call and can be effective on the team, they are not able to make the transference of sonship or allegiance from someone else to the team leader. It may also be that they are simply unable to embrace anyone as a father. Either way, they will, as a result, not carry the 'family genes'.

As gifted as they may be, I really believe that the fact that they are not sons will disqualify them from being a successor to the team leader. That would be true in any context where there is a handing over of a Kingdom work. We should always hand over to a son – someone with the same 'family genes'.

Others on a team may, unfortunately, see themselves as 'symmetrical' with the team leader. By that I mean that they see themselves as being the same or equal with the team leader. Someone like that cannot be a true successor either. There can still be value in what they have to bring to a team. They can still have a gifting and a calling, and I would not deny that where it is genuine. God is a gracious and loving God, and He wants to have the best possible team that He can. For that reason, He uses them together with us, but there is a limit to what they can become in the team.

It can be a problem, though, when someone feels that he is equal to the team leader at every level, all the time, even when the leader is operating in his unique anointing. There is no problem with anyone on team being as good as, or even better than, the team leader at some things. Any true father actually wants his sons to go further than he has. I know that I want my own flesh and blood sons to go further than I have and to do many things more effectively than I can, but there would be a problem were they to see themselves as my equal in the family. The same is true for team, because that is often where rebellion begins.

Our successor, the person we will hand over to one day, should always be a true son – someone with the same ‘family genes’.

There is another potential dynamic within team when some team members see themselves as, and are deliberately working towards being, the ‘successor’; they want to be the one who is going to take over the leadership of the team. They scheme and plot and plan for that to happen. They continually drop hints, almost as Absalom did.

If they cannot take over the leadership and are eventually bypassed, they sometimes split off and start their own team. Sometimes they can be right about their potential, but unless they are also sons, they are not going to be the successor. We have to teach and embrace that principle. Sons will not continually jockey for position.

Someone who is not a true son, but has it in his heart to be the successor, is always positioning things, always wants to be heard, wants his will to be done, is always showing the team that he knows how to do things better, and generally

does everything in his power to set himself up to be the next leader. If only he knew that by doing that, he disqualifies himself from being the very thing he desires to be. I believe that is simply a Biblical principle.

If there is no heart change, then this type of person will either break away and form a team of his own, or he will try to 'lead' the team through the team leader. We would hope that there will be a change of heart and, while he may not become a son, he will at least stop trying to be the successor.

Finally, there can be those on a team who feel superior to the leader and so cannot relate as a son at all. These are people who not only feel that they are an equal or that they could be the successor, but they feel that they are actually better than the leader at every level. It is even possible that they are, in fact, better than he is at a number of things and, once again, there is no problem with that. The problem lies in the attitude that comes across all the time that communicates, "I would not do it that way. Given opportunity I would do a better job than that." Or, "I would not make a stupid decision like that."

I am aware that those who are leaders will, in fact, feel that way from time to time, simply because they are leaders, but when this is how they feel **all** the time, there is a problem. This attitude may not be obvious to all, but the team leader will pick it up, even if they do not know that the leader is picking up their attitude. No matter how gifted and talented they are, this is an attitude that has to be dealt with and the team leader most definitely cannot consider them as a successor.

In God's grace, they can also still be on a team, and we can hope that God will deal with the arrogance, the pride, or whatever the motivation is that is in their hearts. They are not necessarily altogether disqualified from being effective on any team on the basis of those things, but while they feel

superior all the time, there is carnality in their hearts, and very often they, too, go off and start their own thing.

God is a gracious and loving God, and He wants to have the best possible team that He can.

In general, however, I would say that if someone is not a son, then pray for a change of heart. If there is no change then pray seriously that they will remove themselves. If they do not, you may find it necessary to go and ask them to step down. How long one waits to do this I cannot say, but there may come a time when your grace runs out and keeping them on team is unhelpful for everyone.

The point of what we are looking at in this chapter is that not everyone on a team is going to be a true son to the leader of the team. That does not necessarily disqualify them from being effective members of the team, but it does, to my mind, disqualify them from being a suitable successor who can one day take over the leadership of the team.

Chapter 6

True Sons

Before we go on to talk about fathering, I want to look briefly at some of the characteristics, or marks, of true sons. In the first place, **true sons make changes in their own lives in response to their spiritual father; they are willing to make adjustments.** They do not try to change their spiritual father.

Look at John 5:19:

Jesus gave them this answer: “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.”

Jesus did not get in the Father’s way or try to take the place of the Father. He did what the Father did. The one who was doing the initiating here was the Father, and the Son only did what He saw the Father doing, or what the Father told Him to do. He was not trying to reverse the roles and get the Father to do what He was doing. In His heart He was ready to do whatever was required; that was a settled issue. In His humanity, He even submitted himself to His human father and mother. This is the example we are to follow.

The next thing to note is that **true sons do not always know better, or have a better way.** Consider Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:10-11:

You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.

And again in this passage from 1 Corinthians 4:17:

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.

From this testimony of Paul about Timothy, it is clear that Timothy was a true son. As a son, Timothy knew Paul's way of life and he modelled his own life on what he saw there. He did not feel that he had a better way of doing things. As a father, Paul expected that of Timothy, to do what he was asking him do, and not always to be telling him that there was a better way.

True sons do not always want to 'take the reins'. There is no sense in which they claim functional equality with the father. In John 8:28 Jesus said:

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

Jesus did what the Father told Him to. Paul says the same thing of his relationship with Timothy in the passage from 1 Corinthians we quoted above. Paul was confident to send Timothy because he was not trying to ‘take the reins’. Paul trusted him.

There is a lesson on the importance of this to be found in 1 Chronicles 5:1-2. We read there of Reuben. He was the firstborn of Israel and thus entitled to the rights of the firstborn, but he lost those rights. The reason given for this is that he defiled his father’s marriage bed. In that act Reuben claimed equality with his father, and consequently lost what should have been his God-given blessing.

This is an important lesson to teach others with respect to fathering. Good fathering should result in those who are sons continuing in the blessing that a father passes on to his family, and in them eventually becoming good fathers themselves. It is very sad when someone throws this away because he does not honour his ‘father’.

Good fathering should result in those who are sons continuing in the blessing that a father passes on to his family, and in them eventually becoming good fathers themselves.

Another mark of true sons is that **they show a genuine concern for their father’s reputation.** Genesis 9:18-28 tells a story of Noah’s three sons. One son, Ham, looked on his father’s nakedness as he lay uncovered and then called his brothers to look. He had no genuine concern for his father’s reputation. The other two sons did what Ham should have done and took care to cover their father. Noah subsequently

blessed them. Ham, on the other hand, was cursed. Both the blessing and the curse extended to their respective families.

In a New Testament context, we could see this ‘uncovering of nakedness’ as being things like criticizing, gossiping, judging and spreading rumours. True sons do not do this, not even in their communication with other sons. This is a very serious error, and can undermine all the benefits that fathering is intended to impart. Spiritual sons will at times know about their father’s ‘nakedness’ (his weaknesses and failings) because, in his fathering, he will have to be transparent. This is not wrong, but sons should, however, never take any delight in exposing that to others. Their heart is rather to protect him from unnecessary exposure, and to preserve his reputation in truth and love.

True sons also care for their father’s family. Jesus, in whose face we see the Father, demonstrated this even when He was enduring the physical pain and personal anguish in carrying the curse of sin on the cross. From there He called to John and commissioned him to take care of Mary as if she were his own mother.

Jesus never, ever treated the Father’s family badly. True sons will act the same way, no matter what they are going through personally. This is something that those of you who are spiritual fathers should watch out for. Look at how those you are fathering care for, respect, and treat your own spouse and children. If they treat them badly, then how will they handle those who are not as closely related, such as the other sheep you care for?

Finally, **true sons are covenantal.** Let me be clear that I am not talking about the cutting of wrists and signing in blood that some, in error, practice. I am talking about a New Testament relational commitment that is covenantal; a relationship that overcomes differences of opinion, even very

serious ones. Covenantal people really love each other and honour one another.

An illustration of this is seen in the relationship between Ruth and Naomi (Ruth 1:16). When Naomi urged Ruth to go back to her own people, as her other daughter-in-law did, Ruth's response was covenantal: *"Do not urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God."*

Covenant is a genuine heart commitment that we make to each other not to give up on or abandon each other. When we are in covenant with others, they do not easily offend us, and even if we are ever offended, we sort it out quickly. That does not mean, however, that we are eternally and irrevocably bound to a particular group of people. If that group began to embrace heresy or began to indulge in sinful behaviour, we would have to leave.

There is another wonderful illustration of covenant in the relationship between David and his warriors as described in 1 Chronicles 12:1-38, especially verse 18. David tests the motive of a band of warriors who come to join him and they give him a covenantal response: *"We are yours, O David! We are with you, O son of Jesse! Success, success to you, and success to those who help you, for your God will help you."* In the same way, true sons are covenantal toward their father.

Section Two

Chapter 7

What Fathering Is Not

In this section we are going to look at what it is that good fathers do, but first I want to address a few misconceptions about what fathering is. To begin with, **fathers must have a mind-set that spiritual children owe them nothing** (2 Corinthians 12:14-16) and they should never relate to them as if they do.

While we need to teach responsibility and faithful stewardship, fathers should never demand any benefit or privilege from their children. Paul modelled this type of fathering (1 Corinthians 4:15-17, 1 Corinthians 9: 3-27). He knew that he had certain 'rights' as a father, but he never demanded anything. He never insisted on his 'rights'. In fact, he did not want to exercise these rights because he wanted to keep the people, and himself, free. Likewise, we should always be careful not to make our sons feel as if they owe us anything.

I know of a number of situations where a leader handed the leadership of a church over to someone else to lead, but had the idea that the church still owed him something. When the new situation did not work out as he thought it would, he had expectations of the church that he had handed over. Some of them even wrote letters to the church they had handed over, telling them that they owed them support because they were the father of that work. That is bad fathering. That is as far from Biblical fathering as you can get.

We would not deal with our own children that way. If we are fathering them well, we do not put that kind of expectation on them, which they would have to live with for the rest of their lives. On the contrary, good fathering is motivated to bless and to give to our sons. Ann and I decided more than twenty years ago to give the little we can give to our children, as an inheritance, while we are alive, and while we can see them enjoy it.

As fathers, we are careful not to live with the expectation that our children owe us anything, because we want them to remain free. If they ever want to give anything to us, then it must be because they want to, not because we expect it. I would apply this to every work that I father as well.

It may be true, therefore, that the works that I have fathered owe me everything in terms of responsibility, but it is also true that they owe me nothing at all. I have always tried to teach them to be responsible, but the attitude of my heart is that they owe me nothing, and I expect nothing. If we do not handle those we father this way, then we are not good fathers.

As fathers, we are careful not to live with the expectation that our children owe us anything, because we want them to remain free.

Most of us who are fathers will at some time or another feel unsupported, deserted, and the devil will tell us that those we have fathered have let us down, and that we have rights that we could insist on. My response to that is that we had our opportunity while we were leading that work to father well and teach them responsibility. If they do not have it, then it

is not their fault and there is nothing that we can do about it now.

The next point that I want to make is that **true fathering, or mentoring, is not about lording it over others.** Paul, the great apostle, did not insist that his team do everything that he told them to. He would tell them what he thought they should do, but he gave them the right to say no. There is a good illustration of this in 1 Corinthians 16:12 where Paul says that he had “strongly urged” Apollos to go down to the Corinthians, but Apollos did not feel that he wanted to go at that time. Paul did not brand him as a rebel or a disobedient son because of that.

There have been so many bad examples of fathering in the Church, over the years, because those who called themselves fathers missed this point. There was a group in South Africa at one stage that was very strong on what they called ‘fathering’, but the man leading that work was really lording it over everyone at every level. When I saw what they were doing, I stopped using the word ‘fathering’ because it was being misrepresented as something dictatorial.

We must guard against all misrepresentation of fathering, even when there may not be anything evil taking place. At one point, one of the men on the New Covenant Ministries International team with me started to call me ‘captain’. I tried to discourage that too, not because it was necessarily wrong, but simply because I could see that the wrong impression could be created.

Rather than lording it over anyone, fathers make room for their sons to decide for themselves what to do. We need to create an environment in which they can learn a godly self-expression, not selfish, of their God-given gifts, talents and personalities. Good fathers help them learn to let God find expression through who they are, without dictating exactly how they should do everything.

It would seem that Jesus did this with the twelve (Luke 9:1-6) and with the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-11) in that He gave them opportunity to go out and develop and find expression without changing their personalities. He gave them opportunity for God-motivated, God-activated, God-shaped and inspired expression as they healed the sick, cast out demons, etc.

Fathering is also not about being invincible or invulnerable. We all know the truth that *“He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4), but there are still some things that we simply cannot do. Many of the ‘faith’ teachers teach that we are invincible, but fathers who talk as if they are invincible misunderstand what it is that their sons need in this regard. We can do anything that God wants us to do, and we need to live confidently with that knowledge, but we do not have to make our sons believe that we are ‘invincible’.

Children will only believe that their fathers are invincible for a little while anyway. It may be great when they live in the illusion that we are, but the day comes when our children realise that we are like most other guys. We fail and are not the strongest man in the world. If we think that is what fathers should always be to their sons, we will never make ourselves vulnerable, and that is going to hinder us from being good fathers.

Paul teaches us (1 Corinthians 2:3) that a true father allows his weaknesses to come through. He does not hide them, but is vulnerable, as Paul was about the fact that he was ill. He was not worried about the devil getting any glory. At the same time, he did not constantly refer to his illness or try to gain sympathy because of it. He simply faced the facts. This is at the heart of the point that I am making. Good fathers face the facts about themselves. They let others see their weaknesses and they let them see that they are not invincible.

If you are in the habit of acting ‘invincible’, then you need to stop doing so before you start fathering others. Help those who come up behind you to do the same. If you act ‘invincible’, then those young men who are still impressed with you will do the same.

Good fathers face the facts about themselves. They let others see their weaknesses and they let them see that they are not invincible.

This is why we sometimes find that those who cannot speak English properly sound as if they are speaking an English that dates back to 1611. They are simply trying to imitate those who speak this way in order to appear spiritual. I hated Shakespearian type stuff at school, but shortly after I was saved I used to quote everything in King James English. I did not do that because it was natural; I did it because it seemed to me that all of those who were ‘spiritual’ spoke that way.

Paul actually goes as far as to say that most of those that God called were weak, foolish, vulnerable people (1 Corinthians 1: 26-35). He did not try to give the impression that he knew it all and neither must we. Ann and I made a decision early on not to deceive our children into believing that we knew it all. When I did not know something I did not try to make something up; I simply told them that I did not know.

Fathering is not about making it easy (physically or spiritually) for our sons. We see this with Elijah and Elisha. Elijah made it very tough at times for Elisha. In 2 Kings 2:2-10 we see that Elisha had to stay focussed and alert in order to receive a double anointing.

We may ache at times, or even lose sleep because of what our sons are going through. We cannot always bail them out, though, because, sometimes, to leave them to work it through will produce better fruit. We do not necessarily need to deliberately create situations to make it tough for them, but we must not always bail them out when it does get tough either.

This is true of what we require of them when they come through into leadership as well. That is tough for some, but then I know that although I am to bring people through into leadership, it is not wise to make that easy for them.

I asked my own son, Tyrone, as I did of all those that have come onto the New Covenant Ministries International team, whether there were any skeletons in the closet in his life. By that I do not mean silly, inconsequential things, but I want to know if there are any significant issues that could be problematic if they were known. I want to know about it and I want to know that it has been dealt with.

We cannot make things easy in this regard. If we do, we will produce wimps. This is well illustrated by the analogy of what takes place when a butterfly breaks out of the cocoon. It needs to struggle to get out in order to force liquid into its wings so that they will expand and enable it to fly. If the cocoon is cut in order to let it out without a struggle, its wings never develop, and it will never fly.

In the same way, we can short-circuit the plans and purposes of God for our spiritual sons and daughters when we make it too easy for them. Jesus seems to have been aware of this (Luke 9:23; 14:28 and 18:18-30). Even though we do not make it easy for our sons and daughters, we must at the same time encourage them when they are going through tough times.

Fathering is not about being better than our sons.

A good example of this is found in the relationship between Jesus and His Father. The Father is always seen to be affirming Jesus. Jesus was co-equal with the Father, and yet Philippians 2 tells us that He did not try to outdo the Father, and we also know that the Father never belittled Him.

I cannot find one single occasion where Paul, even in his most vulnerable moments, tried to make his sons appear to be less than himself in any way. He did talk about Timothy being timid and nervous, but he encouraged him because he was still young.

Surely any good father wants to see his sons go further than himself. If that is not in our hearts then what we will produce if we begin to ‘father’ will be horrendous.

In the next few chapters I want to look at a number of aspects of good fathering, aspects that I believe are essential for producing sons who can take up where we leave off, and go much further than we have, but with the same heart and the same values.

Chapter 8

What Fathering Is – Part 1

We said earlier that fathers are not to try and appear invincible and should learn to be vulnerable. By the same token, **fathers should teach their sons to be more vulnerable with each other.** In families, there are times when it is valuable for the vulnerability and weakness of one of the children to be talked about at the table. Vulnerabilities should not always be hidden, which is why fathers should encourage genuine vulnerability, where sons are able to share their weaknesses and failures openly, but never in a manner that gives the devil any glory.

Jesus was able to encourage His disciples to open up and reveal their worst side, not only their best side. Examples of that can be found in the following passages: Mark 10:35-45 (especially verse 43), 14:1-7, 17-25, Luke 22: 24-34. One of these examples is when some of the disciples had been talking about who was the greatest. Jesus knew about that discussion and He brought it out into the open. Then He took time to reveal their hearts and to teach them about servanthood.

Another example is when they came back rejoicing that demons had listened to them after He had sent them out to minister, He allowed them to talk this way for a while, and then taught them about greater things in the Kingdom that they were to rejoice about. In this way, Jesus brought out their weaknesses and failings in an atmosphere of their togetherness as ‘family’.

As fathers are themselves vulnerable, and are open and honest about their weaknesses and strengths, they can help their sons to become more vulnerable. For that reason, we must not allow our sons to play their cards too close to their chest. This is something that is particularly important when we are on team together. They must learn to walk in the light with us and with each other as we do need to know what is going on inside of them.

Jesus brought out their weaknesses and failings in an atmosphere of their togetherness as ‘family’.

Many times I have said to the team that I lead that I know that I come across strongly because I do confront life issues. I only backtrack when I know that I am wrong, or that it is important to do so. I have had to learn, however, to also share my weaknesses and not only my strong convictions. Fathers need to be honest with their sons, both about their strengths and their weaknesses, in order that they know how to be that way themselves.

Good fathers are careful to make their sons God-dependent and not dependent on them as fathers or on their own abilities (1 Corinthians 2:5). There are some movements that actually encourage an extreme form of dependency on others in the name of ‘good or accountable ministry’. The discipleship movement is one example of this. The inner healing movement is another. I believe in discipleship, and I also believe in ‘inner healing’, but the way in which these are taught and practised in much of the church encourages people to become dependent on the person discipling them, or on a ‘counsellor’.

This is not the way good fathers deal with their sons. If my grown sons were still dependent on me today the same way that they were when they were three years old, then I would not be a good father. It is a normal part of ‘growing up’ for children to become less dependent on their parents. It is not normal for them to remain dependent.

In other words, good fathering works differently (oppositely, in fact) to the way the church generally does today, because most pastors actually want their people to be dependent on them.

One of the decisions that my wife, Ann, and I made as parents was to teach our own sons to cope with every area of life from an early age in the event that we might not be around. The work we were doing meant that we sometimes went into dangerous areas and situations where we could have been killed, and we wanted our children to be able to live on and know how to cope with life if we were no longer around. Good fathers have that attitude and approach to their spiritual sons as well.

There are times when it seems to me that God, my heavenly Father, withdraws from me, even when I have not sinned. That may challenge some of our theology, but I may go for days or even weeks where I do not **feel** any sense of the presence of God. Then, without any repentance or confession on my part, I sense His presence again. I may be oversimplifying it, but sometimes I think that He simply wants me to grow up. That is the principle. All children need to grow up.

Good fathering means that we teach our sons to be long-range planners and long-range (not short-term) decision makers (1 Corinthians 9:24; 3:12). Let me give you an illustration of this. When I was very young, my father used to give me some financial advice, even though I did not have a very good relationship with my father at that stage. He used to tell me to buy property if I ever had any money, and not

to go for any other type of investment. That was good advice and I wanted to follow it.

The problem was that my father never taught me how to get the money to buy property. When we teach sons about long-range planning, we should not only teach them the ‘what’ but also the ‘how’ that will enable them to achieve the ‘what’.

One of the things that I taught my own sons with respect to long-term planning, was that, when it came to handling their money, they should tithe 10 percent give 10 percent, save 10 percent, and then live on what was left. With 30 years of hindsight, I think that I should have also taught them to give 10 percent as an apostolic offering. This financial discipline not only honours God, it also teaches them about planning wisely for the future.

The Scriptures, from beginning to end, have a long-term perspective, and that is what we need to teach our children to apply to the whole of life. We have to make sure, however, that our long-range planning and decisions are made in faith and not in unbelief or fear. When God taught Joseph to put aside something in the ‘fat’ years so that there would be provision in the ‘lean’ years, Joseph obeyed in faith.

The Scriptures, from beginning to end, have a long-term perspective, and that is what we need to teach our children to apply to the whole of life.

We must also realise that it is not faith that is being expressed when we squander what we have, or when we spend it unwisely, believing, mistakenly, that God will still come through for us. That is presumption, not faith, and almost everyone knows that even though people try to preach this as ‘faith’, it will not work.

Long-range thinking also involves thinking through what the ramifications of decisions we make now will be in one year, or five years' time. It also takes into account what is being communicated by the decisions that we make. What will the people we lead see in the way we plan and make decisions? What conclusions will they come to?

We need to teach our children not to make decisions simply because they seem practical and because they solve a short-term issue, but which in fact create more problems down the line. Teach them to make decisions that have been carefully thought through. We do not need all the answers immediately. Some of them need to be waited for or made after carefully considering all aspects of the decision.

Proverbs 20:21 teaches us that an inheritance quickly gained will not be blessed. As He did with the Israelites, God gives us the land little by little, and that is much better than the way we often want it.

Chapter 9

What Fathering Is – Part 2

A good father presences himself with his family. He spends time with them. No matter how rich or successful we are, or how educated our children become, we are bad fathers if we do not regularly spend genuine quality time with them.

One would expect us to get this right as God's people, but it is a sad fact that we often do not. On the one hand, the church encourages people to be bad fathers, because we make such demands on the people that they cannot be with their children. On the other hand, when we do take some of the pressure off, there are still many who are unwise with their time and do not spend that time with their children; they do other things instead.

Spending time with our 'sons' has to be seen as a non-negotiable for those who are fathering. It is one of the most essential building blocks related to family, and it is no different when it comes to raising a spiritual family.

When we talk about spending time with them, we are not talking about time spent lecturing them; it means giving them time to really get to know us. That includes time spent simply answering their questions, being available for them and making them secure in our love and acceptance of them. It takes time to bring them to a place where they are secure in the confidence we have in them to be what God has called them

to be. Good fathers know how to let their children know that we believe that they can do it. They need our affirmation.

Father/son relationships need to grow and mature to the point that there is genuine friendship and it takes time to build friendship. This is something that I am grateful to have with my sons. My own sons are still three of my closest friends. Tyrone is not only my son; he is my friend. I very seldom treat him only as a son. So much so, that God told me, through the Scriptures and the witnessing of my heart, that the two closest counsellors on spiritual things I must ever have are Tyrone and Jonathan, two of my own sons. That is the kind of relationship one has with those who are friends and peers, not ones children, which is why I relate to my sons as friends.

As long as we only see our sons as our children, we will treat them like children. That is how most pastors see the elders on their team with them; they are the rookies. If that is how we see them, then that is how we will keep them, and the only way they can ever grow up is to become ‘rebellious’ and go against us, even though they are not really rebellious people. By spending time with them, building genuine friendship, and letting them know that we are friends and that we do not only see them as children, we can avoid this.

Spending time with our ‘sons’ has to be seen as a non-negotiable for those who are fathering.

There are a few important points that I would like to make with regard to applying this in a team. Firstly, it is essential that the team members know that the team leader is not the ‘big shot guru’, but a friend who is leading the team.

As a team member, I need to know that the team leader wants to be with me; that he really wants to spend time with me. Team leaders need to make sure that they do not only lecture those on team, but that we mentor, father, and give them time to really get to know us.

All that we teach we should teach in a relational context that is secure. I have tried to deal that way with the NCMI team. They could be secure because they knew that I accepted them. When they failed and messed up, I still accepted them. I corrected what they did wrong, but I still accepted them.

Jesus modelled leadership that made people secure in their relationship with Him. We can see this in many places in the Scriptures, but Mark 9:30 is a good example of that. He withdrew from public places with His disciples and gave His disciples time to really know Him. As we examine the way He related to them, it is clear that He was available to them. He took time to answer their questions, He made them secure in His love, and He made them secure in His acceptance of them.

Jesus modelled leadership that made people secure in their relationship with Him.

This also applies to training people for ministry and leadership in the church. This is, unfortunately, not the way that it happens in many churches. Consider, for instance, what most Bible Colleges do. First they give the student reams of information to write down. Then, once they have all the information, they are expected to reproduce it in an exam. If they can do that, then they are considered qualified to go and pastor people. There is no hope of truly bringing people through into effective leadership with this type of approach!

We must make sure that leadership training in our churches is not like that. We should not simply be gathering a group of people who come to a Saturday morning training session and sign in to let the leadership know that they were there. Then, once they have been to all the training sessions, listened to all that we have to say, and their home cell seems to be a bit of a success, we let them be a pastor.

This is such a dangerous way to release people. We actually run the risk of destroying them, because their abilities will fail them somewhere. It is what they **are** that carries them through in God, not what they know. Wherever necessary we have to change our whole approach to bringing people through and make sure that we are spending time with people, letting them catch who we are, building genuine friendship, and creating opportunity for them to grow in who they are.

Chapter 10

What Fathering Is – Part 3

A good father parents his children. That sounds so obvious, but let me explain what I mean by this. The parenting that I am talking about here is the process of establishing the true self of the son; his true identity.

True masculinity comes from the father, and it can only come from the father. It cannot come from the mother, no matter how good a mother she is. Mothers comfort and nurture, but fathers give true identity and a sense of challenge and adventure in life.

There is an illustration of the importance of this aspect of fathering in Genesis 35:18. Rachel died in childbirth, but just before she did, she named the son that was born, Ben-Oni, which means “son of my sorrow”. Jacob, his father, immediately changed that and named him Benjamin, which means “son of my right hand”.

Imagine if Jacob had left Benjamin with the name his mother had given him! He would always have been known as one who brought sorrow. There was sorrow, that is true, but his father established in him a sense of authority. When we read the blessings and curses that Jacob spoke over his family at the end of his life, we see how this comes through. Benjamin received a large blessing. His father had established the masculine identity of his son.

Is it not interesting how the devil sets things up so that the fathers are never around? Even in good families, the fathers

are generally far too busy to parent well. It is even worse now that so many mothers are also not there much.

True masculinity comes from the father, and it can only come from the father.

I have often wondered about the South African context in which I grew up. When the parents wanted to go out, or both of them worked, they could often afford to have a maid to look after the children. I have since lived in Australia and America where very few people can afford to have a maid at all, and I wonder whether we were really so fortunate in South Africa?

What really happened to our sons and daughters when the parents were away so much of the time? I think now that I would rather live with some poverty, but have the assurance that I am doing everything I can to ensure that my children grow up well. It is better to have less and be with our family than to be working all the time simply in order to have more.

I would like to say a word here to those fathers who travel. When you come home, be at home. Take time out to be with your family. Do not go straight into answering faxes, phone calls and emails. Your children need their father to be with them in order to learn essential things about their identity.

For those of you who are in ministry, and need to work during the time that many other parents can be with their children, try to be at home when your children come home, especially when they are younger. This is, however, not something to use as an excuse to be lazy. Make it genuine time with your family.

A good father plays with his family. In other words, it is not always business; there is also a good dose of fun. Not all of God's dealings with us, as it was with Jesus and His disciples, is business. There is also an element of fun.

That is my heart for the NCMI team as well. I do not want all of our times together as a team to be business. We also need time to 'wrestle' together, as a father does with his children. We need time where ministry is not the main topic, even when there is discipling and mentoring taking place.

Being together as church leadership teams must not all revolve around church business and ministry either, there has to be fun as well. For example, do not talk business/ministry when you go for lunch together. Use those times for fellowship and fun.

Another thing that fathers can do in this regard is to take their children with them when they go places, but make sure that it is not all business. Take those you are mentoring with you when you go out for ministry, and when you get there, make time for some fun. Some years ago, some of the team members were with us in LA and I took them for a day to Disneyland. Some of them rejoiced, but a few were worried about what they would tell their people about spending a whole day in Disneyland.

We went and had fun, though. We saw how team members can 'lie'. After we had been down the 'big drop', I asked them who had closed their eyes. Some of them denied that they had, but when we walked out there was the photograph to show who had been honest and who had not. You know that those are not really lies; we were simply having fun. Those times are so valuable.

Over the years, as the team has got bigger, we have lost some of this, although I have tried to maintain it with some of the team. The main reason for this is that when the team members come to a team time from many parts of the world, they struggle to make time to do this. Many bring the

pressures that they face back at home with them and do not feel that they can be out too long.

What they do, then, is fly into town just before the team time starts on a Monday morning, and then fly out as soon as possible after it ends on Friday. That sends a message that is tough for a father to see and live with. I have to acknowledge that I no longer live with the same pressures that most of them have to carry, but my heart still longs for time together where we are able to spend half a day, or more, simply having fun.

I would love it if team members would plan for a few days extra when we have a team time scheduled. We could then spend time eating together and enjoying being together. This is not being irresponsible. Surely God can and will look after things while we are away. This is something we all need to see the value of.

Not all of God's dealings with us, as it was with Jesus' and His disciples, is business. There is also an element of fun.

Build this into your fathering. Meet for breakfast and then take a few hours for fun before you talk about fathering issues. Over breakfast you may not talk about those things, but you are living out fathering and family.

These times of fun together are one of the times where masculinity is modelled, encouraged and established in the lives of our sons. The history of good fathering has always included fathers and sons doing 'mad', 'dangerous' man things together. I remember how I used to ride motorbikes with my sons when they were only six years old, with them on their own motorbikes.

The reality is that we all need this type of fun, friendship time. Many of the guys on team have told me that when they have been able to spend a few hours around meals together, that these were the best times. That simply endorses what I am saying. God put a need for this kind of time together inside of us.

Chapter 11

What Fathering Is – Part 4

A good father is patient. You see this with Jesus. He is patient with His people. Look at the following passages and you will see how He gives them opportunity to do what He has taught them, and is then patient with them when they fail (Mark 8:14-21, Mark 3:14, Luke 9:1-7, Luke 10:1-9, Luke 10:17-20).

Be patient with those you are raising up in your team. If they fail, do not simply write them off and tell them that they have lost their chance. That is not good fathering. Be patient, give them another chance to do what you taught them to do. Deal with their carnality, but do not reject them.

In Mark 10:35-45, Mark 9:37-45, Luke 9:37-45 and Luke 22:24-38 we see how Jesus dealt with the carnality of the disciples, but was still patient. Very often you can deal with carnality in those times when you are simply ‘being’ with them. There does not always have to be a ‘confrontational session’ in which you take them to task.

Most of us will have heard it said that it is sometimes a good thing to throw your children in at the deep end. This is actually not a very patient way of teaching them something. I believe that a good father does not, in fact, simply throw his children in at the deep end in order to teach them to swim. God does not often do that to us either. I am not saying He never does, but generally He does not.

There are a few times I have felt as if God has thrown me in at the deep end, but normally it is like the picture of the river in Ezekiel 34. The picture that we see there indicates that we are first taken in ankle deep, then knee deep, then we are taken in thigh deep, and so on until we are in so far that we cannot stand – in the ‘deep end’.

That is normally how God deals with us. He is patient with us. If He were not patient, then I would not be here now. In reality, He should have blotted me out more than thirty years ago when I blew it the first time. But He has been patient. I have messed up, but He has been patient. In the same way we need to be patient with those we are fathering.

One of the NCFMI team members, Leon van Daele, often used to say, “Be patient with us, Dudley. Be patient.” In the natural I am the kind of person who says, “But I told you that once. Surely you know it now.” Leon showed me that sometimes it takes thirty or forty times for some to catch it, and so I need to be patient. Leon taught me a lot with those words.

God is patient with us. He does not generally throw us in at the deep end.

A good father also plans for his children and so we need to make plans for our team. God plans for us, and Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that those plans are plans for good, plans to give us hope, to give us a future, plans for success, to prosper us. God thinks about us favourably and plans for our success. See also Psalm 40:5 and Psalm 139:17 and 18. He only wants us to fail at those things that are not His will

for our lives. He plans for us to succeed at everything that is His will for us.

When we father and release people we must have this same heart to see them succeed, even making room for them to do things far better than we can. I say that because I have known leaders who would not release others into leadership because they were afraid of being shown up. There are others who, when confronted with this problem related to another person's being better at something than they were, released them, but secretly hoped that they would fail so that they would themselves still look good.

Good fathers do not think like that. They plan for the success of their children in every area of life. This includes:

- Family life
- Friendships
- Fellowship in the church
- Finance
- Their own liberty as people
- Their function or ministry or business.

Let us look at some of these: Firstly, fathers plan for their success in family life. That means that when they are on our team, we do not destroy family life by placing demands upon them that are ridiculous. When I led churches, I did not ever want the pastors to clock in and out. Why? Because I wanted their family life to succeed. That is why I told them to plan to be home when their children were home.

I still believe in that. If the children come home at 3 o'clock, then they should plan to be at home at 3 o'clock and play with their children. Then pastors can go out at night and visit the flock, shepherd them, and care for them when their families are home. They cannot go and visit them in the afternoon

because they are at work, but they can use that time to be with their own family.

Secondly, we want their friendships to succeed. Even when someone whom we would like to be **our** friend prefers to be **their** friend more than our friend, we thrill at that. Unless we know that they want to be their friend for the wrong reasons. Then we pray that God would spare them the heartache.

Thirdly, we want them to succeed in fellowship, in the life of the church. We want them to have deep, meaningful relationships, relationships that hold out when the storms come.

Fourthly, we want them to succeed financially. That means, in part, that we are not always holding out on them with the attitude that as long as **we** get a good salary, we do not care what the rest of the pastoral team get.

Planning for them to succeed financially also includes insisting that they are people who tithe faithfully before they come onto the team. We teach them to sow and to be generous before they come onto team with us, because we want them to succeed. No one is going to succeed if he steals from God.

Sometimes we encourage the team to sow even in famine, but always to sow realistically, not unwisely. What I tried to do when we needed to see significant finance released for something was to sow personally weeks, if not months, before I went to the team and told them that it was time for us to sow.

Fathers make deliberate plans for their team to succeed, and so they spend time putting these things into them. We cannot afford to be afraid to speak out on these issues, or afraid of being misunderstood. Those who know us will know that we are not in this for the money. That is how I feel. If I wanted money I could have stayed with my own businesses – I had three prior to going into ministry. I could have kept my businesses and would have been rich, but that is not what I wanted.

I want those I am bringing through to succeed, and it is a thrill for me when they do. It is genuinely a thrill for me when they do better than I do. Why? It is because my plans for them are plans for good. That is what we must do as fathers.

God only wants us to fail at those things that are not His will for our lives. He plans for us to succeed at everything that is His will for us.

We must have plans for our team to excel and do better and go beyond us. Think about it! How would you like your children to only reach your level of success? Would you not feel that you had failed? I know that is how I would feel.

God has done some great things through my life, but I want all those I have fathered in any way to go way beyond that. If they only reached the level that I do, I would be grateful that something had happened through their lives, but I would still feel as if I had failed. I want them to succeed and I want them to go much further than I do.

Chapter 12

What Fathering Is – Part 5

Before God made human beings, He created all the beauty that there is in the world. Why was that? It was so that men and women could enjoy it. The account of creation in Genesis shows us that God prepared for us. He is a good father. He made it all for Himself and us. We read in Psalm 24:1 that *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,”* but it also says in Psalm 115:16 that He has given the earth to *“the sons of men.”*

He wants us to enjoy the birds, the sunrises, the sunsets, a brook, the noises, see the rolling of the waves – all the beautiful things He has made. He also wants us to enjoy one another and to appreciate those who have tender hearts. He prepared all of this, and while it is all for Him, He also made it for us to enjoy. In the same way, **a good father prepares for his spiritual children.**

I see the same thing with the Church. The Church has a mandate, but God also prepared it so that we can enjoy some blessing, fun, release and enjoyment out of it. I look at the people in the church and I think, “This is great!” He has churches all over the world that we can enjoy.

God’s preparation and blessings are of an ‘overflowing’ nature, according to Psalm 23:5, where we read, *“My cup overflows!”* His Spirit reveals and imparts the things that He has prepared for us (1 Corinthians 2:9-16), and we are told that it is beyond what we can think or imagine with our

natural mind. This is the heart of a father toward his sons. He wants them to have an overflowing, abundance of blessing. That is why fathers want their children to have everything, and more, than they have. They want them to find blessing beyond their wildest dreams. “*Eye has not seen.*” In John 14:1-4 Jesus says, “*I go to prepare a place for you.*” Thousands of years ahead of the time that we would be in that place, He was preparing it for us.

Good fathers also prepare their children for their future. In other words, we do not only prepare things for them, we also prepare them for what lies ahead. As we said in a previous chapter, a good father is not planning for what he can get back from his children one day. He is not thinking that if he treats his children well then they will look after him when he is old. They should want to do so, but a good father does not hold that over their heads as an expectation.

We have to sit down with our team, whether it is a local church team or a trans-local team, and prepare them for their futures. Tell them practical things, things that have to do with implementing wise strategies for their futures. For instance, make sure that unless God tells them not to have insurance, they do have insurance, health insurance and medical aid. I have seen pastors plan badly and end up living in other people’s garages.

We prepare them for life and ministry. We teach them how to prepare a message and we teach them how to preach, even if they are not preachers. We are fashioning and forming team and we want them to be effective, so we give them opportunity in different expressions of ministry. We prepare them for the realities of life and of ministry, such as how to cope with the pressures, demands and rejection that are associated with both of these.

I prepared my own sons for criticism. I knew that because there was always a group of people who were looking for fault

with me, that that would affect them as well. Unfortunately, the people of God can be unkind, even our own congregation. I did not tell them that, but I did prepare them for criticism.

As we prepare them for life and ministry, we also need to help them to recognise their gifting. Speak to them about it and help them to see what it is, to gain a confidence in what they can do, and then to achieve that potential.

In terms of preparing them for life, we need to give them tools for living life. We need to teach them, where relevant, about courting before marriage. Give them practical guidelines, like:

- Not getting involved in any ‘heavy’ relationships.
- ‘Hanging out’ in a crowd rather than in couples. To enjoy the group dynamics.
- Being careful not to be distracted by anyone who wants a relationship with them because they want to own them.
- Avoid communicating anything with subtle physical messages like ‘the secret hand squeeze’. Tell them where this can lead to.
- Teach them about saving themselves for marriage and being a virgin. If it is too late for that, show them how to recapture what was lost and to live as a virgin.

They also need tools for marriage. Teach them about friendship in the marriage and what husband and wife roles are. Good fathers teach their children about sexual intercourse. I wish my father had.

Another area in which practical tools are required is how to balance ministry, family, fun, friendship, and time alone. Teach them about being ‘at home’ when they are home, about the fact that one cannot have people around all the time.

There is also the whole area of parenting that we can give them practical tools in. That would include the things that we are discussing in this book. Things like the need to spend time with their children and the many other guidelines that will help them to be good parents.

One area of particular importance is learning to impart maleness. We need to show them what true maleness is. Maleness is tough but gentle, wild but respectful, free but disciplined, and it is something that we should spend time showing them.

As we prepare our children for life and ministry, we need to help them to recognise their gifting, to gain a confidence in what they can do, and then to achieve that potential.

Chapter 13

What Fathering Is – Part 6

A good father provides for his children. As a father, I wanted to provide for my three sons for as long as it was right for me to do so. They are all out of the home now, but I still want to see my children enjoying their inheritance while I am alive, not only when I am gone. I also want to see them reach full flight in that which is God's plan for their lives. I know their dreams and I encourage them, and I still do what I can to provide for them and help them live in the fulfilment of those dreams.

I want the same for those I father spiritually, to do everything in my power to see them in full flight in ministry. I believe that the lack of, or poor, fathering in the church has contributed to many of God's people being robbed of the best. Each person has an inheritance in God, and fathers have a role to play in bringing them through to take possession of that inheritance. Their inheritance is not only ministry, though. First and foremost, God is their inheritance. He wants us all to know Him in the reality of who the Scripture reveals Him to be.

To see the nations reached with the gospel of the Kingdom is also a part of their inheritance. We need to provide opportunity for them to get to the nations so that that can become a living reality. Reaching the nations is something that we need to be definite about, and we must not back down on this when people question our commitment to go, because

they feel that the local church should be where we give all, or most of our time and ministry.

Because we need to go wherever God sends us, I have always felt that trying to protect our children from the ‘dangers’ that there are in parts of Africa (Malaria, war, etc.) would rob them of their inheritance. The nations are a part of our sons’ inheritance and so we cannot afford to back down when this is challenged.

Success is also part of their inheritance. That includes success in finance, success in their marriage, in their family life and in all their other relationships. Success needs to be understood from God’s perspective, not the world’s, and with God’s destiny for them in mind.

Each person has an inheritance in God, and fathers have a role to play in bringing them through to take possession of that inheritance.

As I have tried to give my children the very best, I have tried to avoid insisting on their ever doing anything that is really for my sake, and not for theirs. For instance, we should be careful not to insist that they go to university in order to satisfy our own pride, when actually there is a call of God on their lives that does not require that they go to university. We can rob them of something that is theirs by making something a requirement for success that is the world’s requirement, and not God’s.

Matthew 7:11 teaches us that God provides for all our needs (physical, emotional, relational and spiritual), and we have to be a part of what He wants to do to meet the needs of those we father. While it is our obligation under God to do our best in that, however, we are never to point them to ourselves.

Even as we are doing everything we can to be good human fathers, and good spiritual fathers, we must constantly point them to the **eternal Father** as their ultimate source.

There is another comment that I want to make while we are on this point of not building towards ourselves. Always teach those we are fathering, and who are not elders, to invite the input of their eldership into their lives. We never want them to feel that we are all that they need on a human level. That would not honour God and His ways for us. For that reason, we point them to the eternal Father as well as to those to whom He has given governmental authority for their benefit, i.e. elders.

I spoke in the previous chapter about teaching our children to implement wise strategies for their future. This is also a part of how we work with them to see that they are provided for. I already mentioned the aspect of insurances. We should also speak to them about purchasing their own home, where that is relevant. With regard to owning a home, I believe that it is wise to plan to pay off a home in seven years, and not twenty or thirty. They should buy something that will enable them to do that, and so be debt-free every seven years.

God spoke to me when I was leading a church in South Africa, about encouraging every pastor who was involved with NCMi in any meaningful way to own his own home, and not to be living in a house that the church provided. That can so easily lead to their being placed in a position where they must either compromise on convictions, or find themselves out on the street.

The protection that we have in God is another aspect of provision that we need to teach them about. We have protection through faith, through tithing, and through the Blood of Jesus. There used to be so many songs about the Blood of Jesus, and now there are so few. I feel that the Church is all the poorer for it. We have lost a vital element of understanding the protection that is ours in Christ Jesus.

There is a hedge of protection that God puts around us, as the account of Job teaches us. The devil can only get through that if we create an opportunity, such as through unbelief, or if God sovereignly allows that for a season. We need to teach these things because some of the places that they will go to will be dangerous.

Even as we are doing everything we can to be good human fathers, and good spiritual fathers, we must constantly point them to the eternal Father as their ultimate source.

Finally, we also need to teach them how to raise up team around them. For those of us who are married, the first place that we apply that is in the family. It is no good trying to build other teams if that one is not working.

Chapter 14

What Fathering Is – Part 7

A good father paves the way for His children. In other words, he opens doors. Isaiah 22: 21-23 and Revelation 3:8 are two passages that speak about the way in which God desires to open doors. God's way for us to move forward is through the doors that He opens for us; we should never be drawn into the place where we are pushing doors down.

As fathers, we do this by giving our 'sons' opportunity to rise up. I would often ask those on team with me to come with me to another city or another country. When we were there, I would introduce them to the leaders there, tell them that they had something to offer and suggest that they consider having them share. That was a way of opening doors for them. What I always hoped would happen was that they would get invited back.

We can add to that the fact that **a good father partners them.** He takes them with him and provides them with on-the-job training.

A good father has compassion on his children (Psalm 103:13-18). What this means to me is that a good father understands, with compassion, the weaknesses, frailties and inabilities of his sons. As a result, he does not become harsh with them. He 'puts up' with them in a positive way, without letting them get away with things that they should not. This is

how our heavenly Father deals with us. He even puts up with our insecurities at times. He will not abandon us because of them, but neither will He leave us to live with them undealt with for ever.

A good father carries his children (Deuteronomy 1:31, and 33:12). There are times when they are weary, or are simply not able to carry on. In those times we carry them. We do not rebuke them or make it even tougher for them. Good fathers are careful not to push their children too far. Once again, though, even though we carry them, we still point them to the eternal Father.

A good father disciplines his children (Hebrews 12:7). There is a difference between discipline and punishment. Punishment has to do with withholding privilege, or with inflicting pain. Many people feel that this is the way that God disciplines us, and the result is that they fall into the trap of trying to earn favour; they move out of the grace of God.

The church has often presented discipline as a paddy whack, but it is actually more about holding sons accountable, for their own good, and showing them that there are consequences for disobedience. In other words, discipline is about teaching accountability and responsibility. That may involve the withholding of reward or privilege, or ‘inflicting pain’, but that is only a part of discipline. All Biblical discipline has to do with teaching accountability and consequence as a far higher priority than punishment.

As we think through the implications of that, we begin to understand that if we do not discipline our children, we end up imparting the idea that they are not really accountable, and that there are no real consequences for disobedience. Understanding the danger of that has enabled me not to back off when I have had to stand firm and be zealous on an issue.

I know that if I had let those things go, then I would have released something terrible for the person, or the group concerned. Even those who are mature Christians, or those who are leaders, will suffer if we let things go that should be dealt with.

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We all have the potential to stray. Sometimes parents do not want to look like the ‘bad person’, and so they let things remain uncorrected that should really be addressed. The problem is that when you let your children get away with something, you demolish all that was established during the times that you did pay the price and discipline them.

I do not feel that I am overstating it when I say that you lose all that was previously in place. Even when you let them get away with something once, you establish the idea that there is a possibility of getting away with it, and so they will try again.

What we want to cultivate in the hearts of our children is the knowledge that discipline is good for us. Psalm 141:5 says:

Let a righteous man strike me – it is a kindness; let him rebuke me – it is oil on my head. My head will not refuse it.

Righteous discipline is always good (Hebrews 12:1-13 especially verses 6, 10 and 11), including those times that

God uses others to discipline us. As we learn the lessons that discipline is designed to teach us, we can come to the place where we have made up our minds that when God speaks, we want to obey the first time He speaks.

A good father passes on an inheritance to his children (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19). Look too at this passage from Acts 20:28-38:

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone’s silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” When he had said this, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship.

In this passage, we have the account of where Paul was saying farewell to the elders from Ephesus, who he did not expect to see again. He was talking to them about those who would come and try to mislead the flock. As a good father, he was preparing them and passing on the inheritance of what had been established up to that point. He was also making provision for that inheritance to be protected by helping them to understand that others (who may already have been in the group) would come and try to rob them of what was theirs in God.

Inheritance can be lost. In our own context (that of New Covenant Ministries International) many have paid the price for what we have established over the last twenty years or so. We have agonised together over many issues, we have tackled many church plants, and what we have gained so far is a part of our inheritance.

We are currently going through a transition as a team, and we understand that if we do that the wrong way, such as resisting the transition, moaning, backing off, criticising, gossiping, etc., we can lose a part of our inheritance. This is something to teach our sons, so that they understand what could be lost, and also how to ensure that it is not.

Teaching them obedience to the whole will of God is another vital aspect of passing on the inheritance of God to them. When I look back on the decisions we made that have influenced what we have in God, and where we are now, I sometimes wonder what would have happened if we had not obeyed God. What would have happened if we had never left South Africa, or had never spent the season in the USA that we did? There was a price to pay in those moves, but they resulted in very significant events for the NCMI team, and for my own children.

One cannot know beforehand what all the consequences will be of the slightest bit of compromise. I cannot say what would have happened if we had not obeyed God in those

moves, but having seen the significance of what came from those moves, I know that no price is too big to pay to ensure that we continue to walk in God's blessing, and are able to pass on an inheritance to our children.

Teaching 'sons' obedience to the whole will of God is another vital aspect of passing on the inheritance of God to them.

A good father processes his son's doctrine. Look at Paul's exhortation to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15:

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

One of the ways we do this is to make sure that they are really saved, and take them through passages like 1 John regularly to check that the signs of the new birth are evident in their lives.

Good fathers help their children to turn life's struggles into training sessions. We can teach them this from passages like 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.

We can also teach them this by showing them how to deal wisely with the challenges of life. My own father helped me to do this when I was 10 or 11 years old and was having trouble sleeping. He told me that there were others who struggled with this as well, and then told me to get into bed and rest, even if I could not sleep – not to lie there worrying about not being able to sleep, but to rest! That lesson has come with me, and to this day helps me to live with this fact of sleeping very little.

A good father prophesies over his children. This means that we lay hands on them from time to time and trust God to impart something that will fashion and shape their lives. Paul did this with Timothy (1 Timothy 4:14 and 2 Timothy 1:6). Moses did this with Joshua (Deuteronomy 34:9), as did Isaac with Jacob (Genesis 27:25-29). In Jacob's prayer (Genesis 49:9-24) there is a particularly wonderful example of how **a good father prophesies over and passes on his blessings to his children.**

The final point that we will make here is related to the previous one, which is that **a good father prays for his children.** He spends time in God's presence petitioning God on their behalf and hearing what He has to say to them about them. He will also spend time praying with his children.

Conclusion

The ultimate aim of fathering, besides seeing our children go on to become fathers themselves and also begin reproducing, is that somewhere in this process we will find a genuine successor, or two or three who could be a successor. We can then spend more time with those and bring them through. In fact, it is better that there is more than one possible successor in a team, even though only one will eventually step into that role.

If everyone in every area of church life is doing this, then there will always be someone who is ready to succeed them when the time comes for that. That way, a church will not face a leadership crisis, or lack of leadership, when we, or others, respond to God's call to go.

2 Kings 2, which speaks of Elijah being taken up to Heaven, has some wonderful lessons for us with respect to succession. As we read through this passage we see that Elisha had to follow closely after Elijah. In spite of opposition, he was not easily sidetracked, even by interference from the other prophets, and was determined to stay close to Elijah. These are the kind of people that we need to look for.

Elijah watched Elisha closely in order to see what was really in his heart. He questioned Elisha on this to find out what it was that he really wanted. When we are choosing successors, we must be sure that they are not looking for position, possessions, prominence or power. Take time to observe and search their hearts. What Elisha wanted, a double portion of Elijah's anointing, was a clear indication that God's anointing

was already on him. This is what we look for in those who may succeed us.

In verse 12 we see that once Elijah had been taken up, Elisha tore his own clothes. This speaks of the fact that he got rid of the previous anointing; he was willing to leave that behind. It was insufficient and, in leaving it behind, there was also no chance of his resorting back to what he was used to. He had to go forward with a new anointing. This is the type of heart attitude that is vital for those who are suitable to be successors.

The ultimate aim of fathering is that somewhere in this process we will find a genuine successor.

Elisha immediately began to do what he had seen Elijah do. He did not have his own agenda. He continued to follow in Elijah's footsteps, and in doing so he was endorsed by the other prophets.

I end this book with a final word or two to those who God is raising up to be fathers. As you begin to apply all of this and begin fathering in your own environment, start with finding out what their dreams are, what is it that they want to do. Invite a small group around, no more than 12, but do not tell them why. Simply tell them that you want to spend some time (once off) with a small group and see if they want to be part of that.

When you ask people to join you in this kind of forum, it does not necessarily mean that they will see you as a father, or that you will see them as sons. It may not work out that way. At that point you are merely establishing relationship, and so there is no need to talk about mentoring until you are sure that is where you want the relationship to go.

As you start the meeting, give them one to two minutes to share their dreams, and then spend between seven and ten minutes laying a foundation for questions. Make sure, too, that you have breaks and then relax. Do not talk all the time.

In that first meeting you should be able to pick up whether there is potential for something more. If you feel that they could be sons, or that it is simply worth investing in their lives, invite them for a second meeting. My suggestion is that you leave about four weeks between these initial two meetings. That way, no one will feel as if they have been dropped out of the process.

Observe all the time, and then invite those who you feel you really want to father back for more times together. From there you can meet regularly with those you want to be with, although there may eventually have to be a 'separating out', so that you can make these times even more effective as you carry on with those who you feel are truly sons.

As your capacity grows, and if you have the time available, you can do this with more than one group in order to father as many as possible, but be real about what you can and cannot do.

Be sure, however, to always keep this as a flexible arrangement. The group you are fathering should not become a set or closed group. There will be times when you need to move someone out of the group and continue with the rest. The more flexible and open you can keep this meeting together, the less chance there is of anyone forming unrealistic expectations related to what you are doing with them.

Finally, trust God in all this to see those that you father go beyond you. When that happens, you know that your fathering has been successful.