

## **The Cry for Spiritual Mothers and Fathers**

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**"Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel."**

(1 Corinthians 4:15)

Many people in the church have broken lives and have experienced more rejection and pain than most of us can even imagine. These struggling warriors aren't limited in age; they come from all walks of life, and they're desperate for a nurturing spiritual parent, someone to really care and help them find their identity and victory in Christ. Many are filled with self-doubt, fear, and even shame over the things that haunt their past. They want to bask in the warm glow of God's love, but they feel unworthy. Who will help them?

We should not be afraid to offer the encouragement, love, and support they so desperately need as surrogate spiritual mothers or fathers. In fact, our greatest joy comes when we lift up the fallen, encourage the brokenhearted, and touch others the way Jesus would—we are to be Jesus with skin on, to the world in which we live. That's the reason we're here!

Remember, Jesus himself acted as a spiritual Father to the fallen woman, a young lady with a sinful past. He did not throw stones and condemn her because, in His great love, He wanted to restore her. The Bible is filled with numerous examples of good people who temporarily lost their way but were eventually restored to God—people like Peter and King David, for example.

Many of today's lost children of God feel certain that He could never forgive what they've done. As a result, they walk away from the church and the Lord, feeling unworthy to seek help though they're desperate for it. And believe it or not, some are rejected by church people once they actually muster the courage to return to seek forgiveness.

This is an untenable situation—one God hates. In fact, right now He wants to raise up spiritual mothers and fathers to mentor the broken and lost, to bring healing and hope, to touch, heal and mature them. Our assignment is to refuse to give up on them or let them go until they're whole. This new breed of spiritual parents believes that each and every child of God is far too valuable to the body of Christ to condemn or throw away.

In 1 Corinthians 4:15 Paul himself said this: **"...that there were many guardians of Christ but not many fathers."** Even after 2000 years, we are still severely lacking in true spiritual mothers and fathers in the church today. Where are they?

It's not hard to minister to these precious wounded warriors. In fact, they eagerly soak up all the love, grace, kindness, gentleness, patience, encouragement, compassion, guidance and forgiveness we can give.

Jesus Christ was the ultimate spiritual Father. He possessed all of these qualities, and, on some level, we all do. After all, we are created in His image. True spiritual parents will lay down their lives for their children, are always willing to help build a child's character and resolve, ready to nurture the special gifts and qualities that others fail to see. Spiritual parents encourage these wounded warriors to make good use of their God-given gifts, and very often show them how. Today God is not only raising up pastors who have true shepherds' hearts, He also wants everyone in the body of Christ to mentor someone else. That's what community should be about.

A spiritual parent has a genuine Christ-like love for others, and wants nothing more than to lift them up, and cheer them on toward spiritual maturity. The mentor has the unique vision and insight for how best to connect with the broken. Once you're called into action by the Holy Spirit, take the hint. Don't be afraid to step out in faith. Once you accept your new role as a parent mentor, God will be with you every step of the way.

There may be times when the one in your spiritual care wavers or wanders off the path. But it is your duty to be patient, to be supportive while gently wooing them back, and to love them unconditionally, reminding them of their identity in Christ. Many stumble on their way to maturity, but God will be there to support you, to give you the strength to carry on, and the courage to see it through, if you're willing to stay the course.

If your spiritual son or daughter falls you must offer firm yet loving correction while always communicating your love and hope for them. Be the role model they so desperately need by showing compassion rather than harsh judgment, while demonstrating your steadfast belief that God see them as winners, victorious in every area. They just need a cheerleader to urge them on, telling them they can do it.

Remember, Paul said this:

**"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."** (1 Cor. 11:1, NIV).

When they fall away, you must pray for them and believe that God won't give up on them, but will grab hold of their hearts and restore them, as long as they repent and seek true restoration. He will heal their wounds, turn their scars into stars and give them the second chance they so desperately need. Wrap your arms around them and show them the love of Christ; weep with them, and listen to them the way few others do.

You don't have to be a biological parent to be a spiritual mother or father. Paul had no children of his own, but he went on to become the greatest example of a father the world has ever seen. Use your past life experiences to offer love, support, and guidance to someone in need.

In the end, there is no greater investment you can make than giving yourself to raise up the fallen and restore them to God. Bandage a wound, hug a neck, and love on the broken. And you may be surprised at how much you are blessed in the process, doing something that will truly count for eternity.

*Lord, help me to minister to these precious people. Give me the love, grace, kindness, gentleness, patience, encouragement, compassion, guidance and forgiveness for these dear ones. Enable me to be that spiritual parent with a tender heart to the spiritual children that have no one to love them. Help me to correct them in Love. I refuse to give up or let them go until they're whole and healed. Each and every child of God is far too valuable to the body of Christ to condemn or throw away. Lord, you have no misfits!*