

Answering the Call to Be a Spiritual Parent

I never wanted to be a **spiritual mother**—except to my two sons. But it shouldn't have been a surprise that **God** placed me in this role. I regularly asked Him to use me for **His purposes**, and He desires to grow the body of Christ to **maturity**. Simply following His lead brought me to a place of nurturing and training others.

My experience has showed me how crucial the need is for **spiritual parents**. The apostle Paul said of the early church that there were many **guardians** in **Christ** but not many **fathers** (1 Cor. 4:15), and we still lack fathers and mothers today. That's why we have so many spiritual orphans in the body of Christ.

A spiritual parent is one who helps another grow to maturity. Though the primary goal is spiritual maturity, often many other areas of a person's life must also be addressed.

God prepared me for the task of training others through my role as a mother. I found that the things I did to bring my sons to maturity became a pattern for mentoring those God brought into my life to develop spiritually.

What is involved in being a spiritual parent? Your first responsibility is to be led by the Holy Spirit. God will bring those people into your life He wants you to mentor and direct you in the process.

Second, have genuine Christlike love. Love is what causes a natural parent to sacrifice for his child. Spiritual parenting may not involve the same issues, but you need to be willing to give of yourself (1 Thess. 2:8). Your love will prompt you to spend time with your mentees as well as to pray for them and to consider what they need to grow and mature.

Third, seek God for His vision and purpose for them. When you have that vision, you will be able to see past where they are to what they can become.

Then the Holy Spirit can speak through you to activate their anointings and calls and to encourage them to walk in them. As Anita Renfroe says in an article titled "Honoring the Other Mothers," "When women who are not bound to you by relational duty look into your life and tell you that you are gifted, you tend to believe them."

Fourth, provide necessary training and correction in an attitude of acceptance and love. Healthy growth requires pruning, but damage will occur if it is done the wrong way. Help your mentees develop spiritual disciplines, and continually encourage them as they progress (1 Thess. 2:11).

Fifth, transmit a hunger for God. Spread a spiritual banquet in front of those you mentor by sharing what you yourself are learning, what God is saying to you and how He is working in your own life.

Finally, be an example that can be followed. Paul said, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1, NIV). You will make mistakes, but God will cover them if you quickly repent and apologize.

You don't have to be a parent in the natural to be a spiritual parent. Paul had no natural children, yet he was the greatest example in the New Testament of a spiritual father. The victories and defeats you have experienced have prepared you to help someone else mature.

How do you become a spiritual mother? Be available to the Holy Spirit and obey His prompting. Not every person who comes into your life to encourage will be one you bring to maturity, but be open to what God asks you to do.

You can and should be one who brings life to others. The

process may be costly, but the rewards for eternity are great.