

Why Every Believer Desperately Needs a Spiritual Father

I lost my father when I was 3 years old, and a day never goes by that I don't miss him. When I am in trouble I often think, *If my dad were alive, he would know what to do.* And when something great happens in my life, I long to be able to call him and have him tell me how amazing I am. I remember when my first book was published, I cried because my dad wasn't there to celebrate with me. I miss you, Dad! I will see you in heaven.

The Lord has been good to me, though. He has given me four other men who have fathered me. The first was my grandfather, who always called me "knucklehead," loved me and believed in me long before I deserved it.

Then later in life, when I found Jesus, a young man named Art Kipperman became my first spiritual father. He was a Jesus freak and taught me how to follow Jesus with reckless abandon. He was super patient with me. I did Art's funeral about 14 years ago and still love him very much.

A few years after Kathy and I were saved, we moved up to the Trinity Alps in northern California. We lived there a year without the benefit of having a spiritual father and mother living alongside us. Do you know the feeling of not being covered and mentored? I was starving to be nurtured and felt lost.

The Longing for a Spiritual Father Again

I began to cry out for God to send me a father. At the time, I was working as a mechanic in a repair shop. One day while I was laying on a creeper underneath a green Jeep Wagoneer, the

Lord spoke to me, saying, "The man who owns this Jeep will be your father." I had been praying fervently that day about the void in my life, but I didn't even know the man who owned the Jeep.

When the customer came in to pick up his vehicle, I collected his money and explained the work order to him. I was so nervous that I could feel my heartbeat in my throat. He was about 20 years older than I was and seemed very warm and loving. I accompanied him to his car, still trying to gather the courage to tell him what God had said to me and hoping I wouldn't sound like a crazy person. He got in the Jeep and rolled down his window as I stumbled over my words.

Finally, I blurted out, "God told me that the man who owned this Jeep would be my spiritual father!" (I was choking back tears.) How awkward is that? To my great surprise, he turned off the engine and opened the door of his truck. He stood up, wrapped his arms around me and said, "I would be honored to be your father!" This man's name is Bill Derryberry, and he has been my mentor for more than 40 years. His love and discipline have changed my life. I am forever indebted to him. The love that Bill and I have for each other has resulted in many people being born into the kingdom through both Bill's encouragement in my own life and the contagious nature of love when it is expressed through someone. Bill Derryberry is still in my life to this day, and I love him dearly.

Last but definitely not least, I met Bill Johnson when I was 23 years old. I was in awe of his relationship with God. He taught me how to be a father and a husband, but more than that, he showed me how to be a man of God. He taught me that character mattered and that what you do in secret was more important than what you do in public. He promoted me, believed in me, and allowed me to make mistakes without rejecting me. He became my spiritual mentor and my close friend and father.

We Are All Called to Family

Jesus never intended for us to make Christians, but rather, to make disciples. We in the church have given birth to children and then left them fatherless and trying to survive on their own. The word disciple means “learner.” The very nature of a disciple is that they need someone to teach them.

When the church of Jesus becomes a family instead of a group that gathers in a building, people won't just come to church, they will become the church. It will no longer be a place they go to but a tribe they live in, a people they have responsibility for and a family that nurtures one another in good times and in bad, in sickness and health, until death do us part. They won't church-hop just because the worship isn't as good as Joe's Super Church down the street. They will be committed to a family where they hear the voice of their Shepherd in the people who are leading them. This is the importance of spiritual fathers and mothers. This is the importance of kingdom family.

So where do you see yourself in the family of believers? Have you submitted to spiritual mothers and fathers? Or is God asking you to be a mother or father to the people in your life? Maybe you're still searching for a community to call your own. Wherever you are in your process, I want to encourage you to get connected, plugged in and committed to a spiritual family. What's one step you can take toward that? I'd love to hear what you're thinking in the comments below!

I owe my life to the men I mentioned above. May God put men like this in all of your lives. God bless! Happy Father's Day.
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divine purpose. He's a best-selling author, having written more than a dozen books and training manuals to help prepare believers for life in the kingdom. He has a diverse background in business, counseling, consulting, pastoring and teaching, which gives him unique leadership insights and perspectives. Kris has a passion to use his experience and his prophetic gift to assist world leaders in achieving their goals and accomplishing their mission.

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