

Chapter 1

Ye Have Not Many Fathers

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:15

*Dad, as I was growing up,
You always made my world feel safe.
The dear calm of your voice, calmed me...
And the strong circle of your arms circled me.
I never felt vulnerable or afraid,
Because to me, you seemed unshakable.
As I got older, though,
It dawned on me that the world you faced everyday
Was a lot bigger and scarier
Than the one you had created for me.
And I wondered, sometimes, if you felt
Like relying on someone else's strength for a change...
Now that I am an adult and living on
The outside of your safety net,
I finally understand what sacrifices
You made to make sure "my world"
Felt alright all the time.
Growing up in the sanctuary of your love
Is something
I will always cherish and a memory
I could never forget.*

Dierdra J. Brown

The gift of a "father" is a rare gift. Not every man of God is a father. Not everyone who teaches well is a father. Paul pointed this out to the Corinthians. Not all the visiting preachers and teachers were fathers.

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:15

There will be many people who will make an input into your life. Instructors and teachers abound but these are different from fathers. A father's input is comprehensive. It is a total package that cares about you more than just giving you a good teaching. Whereas a father's heart is concerned about your total welfare, the teacher's heart is only concerned about completing the lesson.

As such, there are not many fathers! It is easier to go through the prepared notes than it is to give total care. People are so ungrateful that it takes the higher grace of fatherhood to patiently escort a person through the darkness of life.

There are many, many pastors, evangelists and prophets, but a fathering prophet—who can find? That is why Paul said: “You can have ten thousand instructors but you do not have many fathers.”

The key characteristic of a father is not his age but his ability to produce after his own kind. Contrary to some opinions, there are many young people with a father's heart.

In the natural, people often become fathers at a young age. The proof of fatherhood is in *the children* who are produced by the father. It takes love, commitment and patience to bring up children. In the end, *the children* attest to your fatherhood.

If you compare the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, for instance, you will find the differences between a fathering prophet and a non-fathering prophet. These differences become quite clear when you study their ministries. By comparing the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, you quickly see the differences between a man who has a father's heart and one who does not.

Both Elijah and Elisha were excellent prophets. But Elijah had an additional gift of being a father. That is why he had a successor. Elisha had no successor. He cursed Gehazi who was next in line to him. He cursed Gehazi when he made a mistake with money. The father's heart does not curse his only child.

The fathering spirit is that thing which causes a man of God to produce people just like himself in the ministry. Very simply put, the fathering gift is a manifestation of God's love. It takes love to bring up people who don't understand what they are being brought up for.

It takes love to bring up people who will not understand you for many years. These people will have a wrong perception of you until they get to a certain stage of maturity. Everybody wants to look good all the time. Most people are not prepared to be misunderstood for many years.

Truly, God sends many, many teachers who minister to our lives. They will minister the lessons and the points that make up the doctrine. But a father will go many steps further. *In addition to teaching you, he will minister the love and the patience that are needed to bring us into God's perfect will.*

Idealism in a minister makes him look for perfection all the time. Idealists and perfectionists are not usually good fathers. They often do not appreciate how the grace of God is working in someone's life. They insist on perfection all the time and that is not possible with human beings.

There are many people who receive me as a good teacher. Not as many are touched by the Lord to receive me as a father.

May you find a father in this life! May you receive the capacity to love and to become a father yourself!

Furthermore, by these few pages, my son, be admonished because of making many books there is no end.

