

## Spiritual Motherhood and Fatherhood

By the terms “spiritual *motherhood/fatherhood*” I’m not referring to spiritual responsibilities to “bring... up” our own children “in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” as per Eph.6:4; *et al.* Instead, I mean having “spiritual offspring” of the sort that Paul felt and administered to Timothy, when the apostle referred to him as “my beloved son,” 2Tim.1:2; cf. 1Tim.1:2,18. Now don’t get ahead of me on this, because a spiritual “son” that preaches the gospel isn’t my focus either. So what is the point?

As we grow and mature *spiritually*, it is as natural to “reproduce” *spiritually* as it is *physically*. Thus, “spiritual offspring” are the result, and we become “spiritual fathers” and “spiritual mothers” to these “children” despite having no blood ties other than that which we share through Christ, cf. 1Cor.10:16; 12:12-13. But just to make things (hopefully) clear, let’s move away from the relationship between Paul and Timothy and consider the metaphor from 1Thess.2:1-13.

In 2Thess.2:1-6, Paul first references some of his other “spiritual children” (at Philippi) and the problems he had with them, v.2, and then mentions that despite the difficulties (“*opposition*”) his efforts there in Thessalonica had not “*been in vain*,” v.1. That is, “spiritual children had be *brought forth*- and he is now with this second letter as well as the first one, seeking to continue their education. From this we need to understand that producing “spiritual children” is very much akin to their physical counterparts in that our parental responsibilities do not end with spiritual *conception* or even *birth*, but actually only then begin!

Next, and though it may not be exactly his point, Paul identifies a key to becoming a spiritual parent: to understand and view oneself as being “*entrusted*” with the gospel- the “*seed*” (Luke 8:11) of the kingdom, vv.3-6. Every Christian, by the nature of his/her own obedience to the gospel, has been “*entrusted*” with the gospel in that they now have the ability to become “spiritual parents” simply by telling someone else what they understood and did to become a Christian, 1Pet.3:15. Some, understanding not only this ability but this responsibility, and very *fruitful*, cf. Matt.13:23. Others, failing to recognize their reproductive abilities and responsibilities never “*bear fruit*,” and would do well to carefully consider John 15:1-8.

Now we get to the point in the text with vv.7-12 where **spiritual “motherhood”** and “**fatherhood**” really come to light. Note some of the important considerations of each...

- **Spiritual “motherhood”** requires/involves: **gentleness** and **tender care**, v.7; **fond affection** produces willing **self-sacrifice**, v.8; and **labor and hardship**, surely comparable to their physical counterparts, as well as **constant, diligent effort** should enlighten and encourage us toward, rather than scare us away from, becoming a spiritual parent and its incumbent responsibilities.
- **Spiritual “fatherhood”** likewise requires/involves: the **exemplary behavior** for your spiritual child/children- so you need to be especially **devout, upright**, and **blameless** so that they can, as children are want to do, follow (safely) in

your spiritual footsteps, v.10; **constant education**- note the words **exhorting**, **encouraging**, and **imploring** as used in v.11 (surely this is *provisional* aspect of spiritual fatherhood!); and from v.12, **always keeping the goal in mind** of rearing spiritual children who “*walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls*” us “*into His own kingdom and glory.*”

It is said, and rightly so, that “having children changes us.” Usually, this change is for the better. Children allow us the opportunity to “grow up” and “take on adult responsibilities” because now have we someone who is not only part of us, but also dependent upon us for their growth, development, and welfare. Becoming “spiritual mothers/fathers” is no different in these regards, only the responsibilities and rewards are even greater... for them and us! If *children* are “*gift from the Lord*” and “*the fruit of the womb is a reward... like arrows in the hand of a warrior*” who render one *unashamed* at the gate (cf. Psa.127:3-5), how much more so for those who “*bear much fruit*” for “*eternal life*” as “spiritual mothers” and “spiritual fathers”! Are you spiritually “grown up” enough to become a spiritual “father” or “mother” to someone else? If not, why not? Think about it, please. Eternity is at stake- possible for you, but definitely for others! (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at [vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com](http://vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com); email to [mrpcstrong@hotmail.com](mailto:mrpcstrong@hotmail.com))