

# Spiritual Fathers and Spiritual Sons

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### Introduction:

It seems that since the 1990's, the Holy Spirit has birthed an interest in the topics of sonship, spiritual fathers, fathering, spiritual sons, the orphan heart and related themes. All over the world there is a cry for father's. This is also true of pastors, who under the denominational method of Christianity, still found themselves in many cases to be 'alone', even though they were theoretically a part of a Body. This book summarises issues which are raised, considered and preached about the world over.

The major points of this book were drawn after analysis of search engine query statistics, which highlighted particular questions that are being asked online. In answering these questions, the majority of information has been drawn from John Kingsley Alley's "The Spirit of Sonship." This short book can be considered in part to be a summary of John's book and this is done with his permission.

The purpose of this book is to help with the advance of the Kingdom of God and written with several types of people in mind. Firstly for the pastor or leader with little time, but needing concise and accurate information. This book can be read in under an hour.

Secondly for many pastors in Asia and Africa, a regular book of 200 pages, worth about \$20, is beyond their means, and is too big a file to easily download in a small Internet café. Hence this summary of information. Being quick to download, it is accessible by all, and also free of charge on our ministry website [www.peace.org.au](http://www.peace.org.au)

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May you find this message inspiring and discover the Holy Spirit at work in you as you read.

Many Regards  
David Alley

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## **Chapter 1 – The Church is Changing**

Every spiritual leader knows that the Church is not what it should be. There is a longing in the heart of every genuine Christian leader to see God's people become what they should be, and to see maturity in the Body of Christ. There are things that need restoration, and these are a work of the Holy Spirit which we are asked to participate in.

In Acts 3:21 we find one of numerous references that refer to this idea. *“Heaven must hold him until...”* and the theme continues repetitiously with verses such as 1 Corinthians 15:25-26 which says *“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.”*

Before the last enemy death is destroyed, many things must be brought to the feet of Jesus. Once a study begins scripturally on the concept of restoration, it becomes vast quickly. We the Church have a way to go, and in regards to that, we are going. The Body of Christ is going to continue to change until eventually it becomes mature, attaining to the measure of the fullness of Christ.

Including all who claim the name of Jesus, and considering them to be the “Church,” (the Body of Christ) there are in excess of 2 billion people who are Christian. This Church is traditional, mostly formal, liturgical (has a pattern of worship) and on the whole denominational. It is generally less like the New Testament church and rather more like the Old Testament example.

Even most modern and evangelical Christian groups still exhibit many patterns and ways which can be considered 'liturgical'. They are simply more modern traditions or patterns. All of these things (liturgy, patterns) are outward and don't really describe the heart of God's people. They are not a true reflection of who people are.

The Old Testament had much to show us practically, physically and in tangible realities. However the book of Hebrews tells us that these are all shadows and types. The New Testament is about different realities such as the heart, about Christ, and our attitudes toward each other. That is why “love” is such a strong focus. It's not something you can formalize with a constitution, or denominational rules. There is no “love government” or “love council” and it's much more vague and harder to understand and explain, and yet simpler than anything we've known.

The Church in the world today is changing. This is God's doing, not man's. The Body of Christ is changing from being institutional, denominational and organisational, and it is becoming relational. It is changing from being centred around formal organised activities, to becoming centred around relationships and the heart. It's a dramatic change of thinking for people – a paradigm change. The Church is becoming like Christ. Activity and program will continue but the church will not be described by the activity.

Once you have seen it, there can be no unseeing of it. Jesus said in John 10:30, *“I and the Father are One.”* This was not some vague concept of Godly unity. This was the fact that they WERE one in heart and mind. They thought and felt the same way. They were *“on the same page.”* They were singing from the same songbook. They felt the same way about each other. They were ONE. It was very much a heart thing.

Then Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane that the Church would become one, just like He and the Father were one. Christ will have His prayers answered. Jesus' prayer was that we would come to the same place as They had. This is a heart thing too.

All around the world, people are growing tired of the traditional form of Christianity. Although it may not be good that some people are leaving congregations, it's a sign that people are wanting to find faith that is deeper than an outward form. And at the same time, many people are flocking to Christ. Pastors are yearning for fathering. Do not doubt that God is at work to bring about some great thing. It is the returning of the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.

Essentially this means that pastors will not be alone in the ministry, they will have a father in the faith, who is a person who knows them and walks with them. It also means they will be a father to those with them, and love them and walk with them too.

At Peace Apostolic Ministries and our church Peace Christian Church, we refer to these kind of special relationships as “father-son relationships.” You will hear us or others talk about “sonship.” That's a shorter way of talking about the same thing. Its not just sonship towards God himself, but the descriptor of the kinds of relationships we should have towards our spiritual leaders, and between each other.

## **Chapter 2 – What is a Wineskin?**

Jesus said that you cannot take new wine and pour it into an old wineskin. This is because new wine expands in size and can break a brittle old wineskin, losing the wine. Jesus was of course less concerned with wine than with spiritual realities he was trying to explain.

Bible types and symbols tell us that the wine is the Holy Spirit and the wineskin is the container of the Holy Spirit. In one sense, the wineskin is God's people and in each generation God does something new with His people. There is new wine, God moves in new ways and in that sense there is always a new wineskin for every new thing God does.

However if we really understand what Christ was saying, there is only one new wineskin. There was an old wineskin which was the dealings of God under the law and the Old covenant. That wineskin was full of shadows and types and had many symbols of things to come. That old wineskin was legalistic, black and white, and focused on outward things.

However God could not do what He needed with that kind of wineskin. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost could never be contained by that kind of wineskin. The wine would be wasted and there would be nothing left. There needed to be a new wineskin which was fresh and pliable, and that was the Church.

The new wineskin that God desired was NOT something that was formal, comprised of rules and regulations, but was something of the heart. It was something less tangible but even more real. Jesus initiated it Himself when he said “*A new commandment I give you, that you must love one another as I have loved you.*” (John 13:34) It was a revolutionary moment and Jesus did away with the old wineskin knowing it would never be suitable, and introduced something quite different which would hold the wine He knew was coming.

God desires to pour out the Holy Spirit on His people and it was prophesied in the book of Joel. “*In the last days I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh.*” (Joel 2:28 & Acts 2:17) God needed a wineskin suitable for that purpose and we will describe in more detail in the next section exactly what that new wineskin is like.

So what we are saying is that God wants to dwell among a people, and these people are a people of “the heart.” It is something made and joined by proper relationships between people, relationships of the heart. This is a wineskin that can contain what God is wanting to do, whereas a traditional type of religion is not the ideal vessel for a movement of God.

### **Chapter 3 – The New Wineskin.**

When God said He wanted to do a “new thing” He meant it literally concerning the time shortly to come. And, the word new, meant that it would be completely new, nothing at all like the previous thing. In this He referred to the day of Pentecost, the birth of the Church, and the reforming of His people with relationships through Him as the common ground between them.

The Children of Israel left Egypt for a “new” way of life, and yet the Egyptian way of living was all they knew, and they continued to be enslaved by it because of their old ways of thinking. We have all heard sermons where the preacher said that “it was easier to get them out of Egypt, than to get Egypt out of them.” This is a problem common to all of us.

So God has this New Wineskin, and it's very different to what we have known. The whole wineskin is built with relationships. In 1 Peter 2:4-5 it says *“As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”* (NIV) And so this and many other Scriptures show us that God is trying to build something together by joining people together. This means the sharing of our lives together and the giving of hearts and being one that way.

Previous to the Day of Pentecost, the apostles and the disciples were a group of people, and were one because of the fact that they had something in common, and that was Christ. However they didn't get agree with each other. They fought about who was the greatest, and there was rivalry between them. We refer to this as the spirit of competition. Their hearts were not synchronised by the Holy Spirit and were not in step with God or each other.

However after Pentecost they had one heart and one mind, and worked together for the sake of the Kingdom. There had been a change in the way they saw each other, and felt about each other. Their lives had been knit together.

It was THAT kind of joining that IS the new wineskin, the Church. It is that kind of togetherness which builds the church and makes it a holy place. It is that kind of people that is the new wineskin. Into a people like that, the Holy Spirit (the wine) can be poured out, and can be contained for the purposes of God.

As you can no doubt see, the new wineskin is hard to define, especially if you are still so accustomed to the old way of doing things, or the way you suppose Christianity should be. It's hard to see, and yet once you see it (like those 3D image books) you will never be able to unsee it, and things will be permanently different for you.

If we could describe the new wineskin in one word, we would say relationships. However if we could describe it with more detail we would say the new wineskin is “father-son relationships in the Body of Christ.” It is the way people love their leaders and the way that leaders love their people, and the way they work together, just like God the Father and God the Son did. They are our example. If this doesn't make immediate sense, then continue reading because as the next section will reveal, this is the nature of God Himself.

### **Chapter 4 – God is a Father and a Son.**

*“In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways,*

*but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being sustaining all things by his powerful word.” (Hebrews 1:1-2)*

The greatest and most astounding revelations of God were reserved for exactly the right time and place in history – the time referred to in the text above. The apostle Paul said of this: “*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son...*” (Gal 4:4a) The word translated sent here is “*exapostsello*” - to send forth on mission. An apostle, the apostle of the Father, had come into the world.

The amazing revelation is that God is God in father and son; that God is a father-son God. But it is not just that God is a father who has a son, but also that *God is a son who has a father*. This Father and Son are just like each other, as in that old saying, “like father, like son”.

Many people who struggle spiritually have greatly mistaken notions of what God is like. They think that Jesus, as saviour, is loving, kind, merciful, forgiving, tender, gentle and humble. At the same time they think that God the Father is tough, judgemental, hard to get to know, law-keeping, and rigid in dealing with sinners. Please understand that the reason Jesus is gracious, loving and merciful is because that is exactly what the Father is like.

If the revelation that “God is God in father and son” had not come to us from the Son of God Himself, but had come from some other prophet, say Amos or Jeremiah, we might not have been inclined to believe it. But this revelation was the most important and critical of all, something we truly know and understand if we would walk with God. Therefore, it had to be brought by Christ Himself.

There are no doubt many mysteries in the Godhead pertaining to the life of an eternal God. As it is, the Bible does not say much at all about the relationship between God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Neither does it say much about the relationship between God the Son and the Holy Spirit. But the Bible has a tremendous amount to say about the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. This is so because this relationship is such a vital one, and the revelation of it such a critical one, for our sakes.

Understand then, that God is by *nature* a Father-Son God. And being self-determining, God has chosen for Himself the kind of God He will be. (Exodus 3:14) Being holy and perfect, and having been always this way, He chooses to be Father and Son, and has always been Father and Son. This is the perfection of holiness.

Whilst one is Father and the other Son, neither has lived a moment longer than the other. They are equals in every sense of the word. Fathering and Sonship here is not hierarchical, but relational. It is not a superior/inferior relationship, but a relationship of equals. Even in human terms, you can't be a father and call someone a son without this being, at the least, a calling of that person to become what you are, to stand where you are, and to become one with you. This is why the Pharisees were so shocked about Jesus, because by declaring Himself to be the Son of God, they knew He was claiming to be equal with God. (John 5:17-18)

As people made in the image of God, and as part of a Church created by this God, we bear his likeness. And so we too bear the mark of father and son, and the Church is filled (or should be and will be) with father son type relationships.

## Chapter 5 – The Relationship Between God the Father and God the Son.

It is important for us to understand how the relationship works between God the Father and God the Son. This will give us insight concerning the way in which we must walk in Godly relationships with each other. We must be careful to pay attention because *“he has spoken to us by his Son.”* (Hebrews 1:2) It is not only from Jesus' words we must find life, but also from the example of His way of life – otherwise we are not His followers.

Firstly, how does God the Father feel about His Son? The Father loves the son deeply and passionately; He cherishes Him above all. (John 3:35) As far as the Father is concerned, there is no one like His Son. He is the apple of His eye. He watches over Him, and holds Him in loving and tender embrace. Nothing is too good for His Son. We are told the Father entrusts all things to His Son, including all judgement. (John 5:19-23) When it was necessary to choose a saviour for lost mankind, and there was no man righteous, God the Father chose to send His own Son, to embrace both human nature and a physical body, to redeem man from his sin. He sent His Son into the world to be the saviour of the world, and in this the Father has made a determination. All things will be consummated in His Son. As far as the Father is concerned, the Son is so important, so central to all that the Father is, that unless a man receives the Son, he cannot come to the Father. (John 14:6) *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”* (John 3:36)

How does the Son feel about the Father? The Son of God loves and reveres His Father, honouring Him in all things and above all things, and chooses to only and ever live for His Father. He came into the world in obedience to His Father, and lived His whole life upon earth in that same, submitted obedience. He was totally surrendered to the will of the Father. He said, *“For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.”* (John 6:38) For the son, the Father is the centre of all things. Jesus remarked, *“By myself I can do nothing; ...for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”* (John 5:30)

In teaching His followers, Jesus constantly pointed them to the Father. He would spend many hours in prayer, and long nights in lonely vigil, seeking His Father. And He longed for the day when He would return to His Father in glory. *“Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.”* (John 17:1)

At the end of the age, all things shall find their consummation in Christ, the Son of God. But when God the Father has made all things subject to Christ, then Christ shall submit all things, including Himself, to His Father. (1 Cor 15:24-28)

So we see that the Father and the Son are totally devoted to one another. There is no independence, no personal agenda, no private action. Each is completely one with the other.

This is not only the nature of God, it is also the nature of the fellowship into which Christ has called us. You and I, as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, are not called to independence, or unilateral action, but we are called to find oneness, not only with Christ but with each other too.

This greatly clarifies something we must understand; the intimacy and unity of fellowship that is shared by the Father and the Son is the *same* fellowship into which you and I are called. When the Son of God described us as being called to *“complete unity”* (John 17:23), He was describing the kind of unity and relationship that exists between God the Father and the Son. We are called to share the father-son nature of God.

There are a few more things that must be said of God at this point.

God is a self-determining God; He chooses for Himself the kind of God He will be. God is perfect, God is holy, God is unchanging, and God is a three-persons-in-one God. Do you know why God chooses to be three persons? Because if God was only one person, He could not be perfect, and could not be holy. Even if God was two persons, He could not be holy. For God to be a *holy* God, a *perfect* God, He must be three – or more.

Here is how to understand this. You know that the Bible says, “*God is love.*” (1 John 4:16) It is not possible for God to be perfect or holy if God is not also love. In eternity, God must fellowship or this statement is meaningless and love is powerless. If God were to be love but have no fellowship, then God would be powerless to express His nature. And so it is not possible for God to be holy, or to be love, unless he lives in perfect communion with others – without division and without independence, there must be a perfect union.

The “spirit of sonship” embodies certain attitudes, certain values and certain actions. Principally, this is an attitude or grace we hold in our hearts towards other people, as well as being an attitude of heart toward God.

At the heart of the universe is a father-son relationship. Everything that has been made has been made through that father-son relationship, including your salvation in the cross and the shed blood of Christ. That shed blood only has power for you because a certain son had a certain relationship with a certain father, and they walk in it forever. If that relationship did not exist, you could not be saved.

At the heart of the cosmos is this father-son relationship, and everything comes forth from that. Your eternal security, your welfare, the fact that your name is written in heaven, the fact that you can believe your sins have been forgiven, and that you will live forever with Christ, is dependent on one thing and one thing only – that a certain son walks with a certain father, and walks with Him forever. We ought to thank God for such a father and son.

## **Chapter 6 – What is Sonship?**

Sonship! It is, quite simply, the way God prefers to do business. If you mean business with God, you really need to learn what it means to be a son to a father in the Body of Christ.

We have already discussed in the last two sections that God presents Himself to us as both a father and a son. This means that not only is God a Father, but also that *God is a Son*. As God's people made in His image and made to be like Him, sonship is really having that attitude that was in Christ in having the heart of a son towards leadership.

What we are talking about is how to be a “son” to someone else in the ministry. How to love and serve another with a whole heart, how to give the heart to someone in the Lord and to walk with them.

Previously a lot of people thought that the “spirit of sonship” was something that helped us relate to our Father in Heaven. And of course that is true, however it is not only that. Now we are realising that the spirit of sonship is an attitude, and values shown towards the fathers we have been given in the Body of Christ too. And of course it is the same attitude we should have toward all people. It is the love of Christ made genuine inside of us by the work of the Holy Spirit.

If then you want to walk in the greatest possible measure of God's blessing, you will need to learn how to be a son in the ministry of Jesus. It is not difficult; it is a case of being willing. Do you really have the heart that a son should have? Do you have Christ's heart – willing to be nothing, willing to be a servant, willing to be humbly natural in relationship to other people?

We see this example of sonship in the heart towards people in the lives of Joshua towards Moses, Joseph towards Potiphar, David towards Saul, Elisha towards Elijah, the disciples towards Christ, Timothy towards Paul, and Ruth towards Naomi. There are many examples in the Scriptures of people giving their heart to another, which was in reality the “spirit of sonship.”

The Bible says to “*have the same attitude that Jesus Christ had*” (Phil 2:5 NLT) and in these examples we see people that served and loved other humans and in doing so exemplified Christ. We must learn that loving God IS loving people. We cannot say we love God and yet not have this evidence in the way we treat our leaders and fathers in the Church and in the Body of Christ. We are coming to see that in fact we do have a very practical way of showing love towards God, by loving the leaders He has given us and loving the people He has placed around us. This love must come from the heart, and be genuine.

This is the Spirit of Sonship.

## **Chapter 7 – What is a Spiritual Father?**

To answer this question effectively, we first need to lay a foundation. There is a great need in the world for fathers. We are not talking spiritually here, just in terms of natural life. The majority of people in prison in western nations come from homes with no father. Statistics show that children do better at school, and achieve higher grades and better careers when there is a father present. That is not the subject of this section, but is simply an illustration of the need for fathers.

There are so many things we derive from our fathers. Every son and daughter needs to hear the voice of a father, for a father's voice speaks love, affirmation, affection, approval, motivation, correction, success, permission to succeed, blessing, identity, courage, and security. Let us consider a few of these points briefly.

A son or daughter gets their sense of identity in the main from their father. The question of “Who Am I?” is answered in a child's heart by their interaction with their father. It has been said that 85% of what a person thinks about themselves comes from dad.

A father supplies the motivation that a child needs, and gives the discipline by which a child overcomes a lack of motivation.

It is a father that gives his son or daughter 'permission to succeed'. This 'permission' is written subconsciously upon a child's heart by what a father says, and by the attitude he takes to them. Some face life with confidence and some struggle. It is the father who has the power to speak and release in a child this subconscious inner sense of approval that tells them they have permission to succeed in life.

Whilst we could elaborate much, these are some of the things fathers provide, and they are very necessary. Spiritually this is the same too. The need for spiritual fathers is immense.

Many pastors on their own in the ministry have struggled, having to work hard without a “spiritual

father” who encourages, supports, and loves through it all. We are not meant to walk alone.

When Jesus turned 30 years of age, the time had come to commence His public ministry. He came to be baptised by John. Upon this occasion the voice of God was heard audibly, an unusual event, and evidently important. *“This is my son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.”* (Matt 3:17)

Why did God the Father speak like this? Because He knew the importance of a father's voice for a son. Jesus was receiving the approval of His Father, and it was done publicly so we would also know how important that is.

A father's blessing helps establish a faith system in the heart, but quite apart from the approval, security, identity, and the rest that comes with a father's love, spiritual power also flows with the blessing.

So a spiritual father is a man or woman in the ministry (the term father is inclusive) and refers to a leader or someone in the ministry who cares for sons. (also inclusive) In the same way we need a father in natural life (and cannot be born without one) so we also need a spiritual father for us to really live and do well.

God Himself is the model in that He was a Father, and as God the son, He needed a father. We should not be so proud as to assume that we don't need a spiritual father if Jesus Himself had one. At the same time we realise that we must ourselves become fathers so as to provide love and blessing for those given to us to care for.

A spiritual father is a person God provides to help bless and care for those in a personal (not an organisational or denomination) way and help them to grow and find life by loving and walking with them.

The last verse in the Old Testament says that if the hearts of the fathers don't turn to the children, and the children's back in return, then the land would be cursed. This verse indicated to us how great and important a need this is.

## **Chapter 8 – What is a Spiritual Son?**

Jesus was God, a Son who had a father. We are being made to be like Christ and will have the nature of sons. Essentially all believers are spiritual sons (for more on gender language, see the next section) and all need spiritual fathers, even if not all believers embrace or even understand the idea. A spiritual son is a person who recognises their need for God and embraces the fathers in their lives, the people placed there by God, and walks with them into spiritual maturity.

A spiritual son is a person who loves God, and knows how to walk with others in faith, to grow, mature, and become a spiritual father themselves, whilst at the same time always remaining a son. Jesus Christ was always God, and as God was also a Father, and yet has a permanent position as a Son. Without it being this way, there would be no salvation for us. Jesus walked with His Father and served and honoured Him as an example to us. There is something very powerful and essential in this sonship, and we desire to also have this spirit of sonship within us.

We have to understand this *sonship*. We must come to appreciate the attitude and values of Jesus Christ, for to this we are right now being conformed by the Holy Spirit. If we reject this, we reject the purpose of God in our salvation. This is what salvation is all about, as the writer to the Hebrews

said, *“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that god, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.”*  
(Hebrews 2:10)

So let us be very clear. Sonship, and our conformity to this pattern IS what the Christian faith and our salvation is about in its entirety. To this outcome all of the Scriptures speak and direct us. It is a destiny that can only be achieved by walking in relationships – relationship with God in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and as the Scriptures make plain, relationship with God's people as well.

For example, the apostle John included a striking statement at the beginning of his first epistle.

*“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”* (1 John 1:3)

This is a thrilling Scripture, which not only clearly reveals that our fellowship with the saints and our fellowship with God the Father and Son is the same fellowship, but more. Like in other places in Scripture, the Holy Spirit has purposefully inspired the writers to interchange what we would have thought was the acceptable order when referring to Christ and the church. The purpose is to accentuate the truth that any fellowship with God the Father and Son must of necessity be also seen as fellowship with the saints. To reject the fellowship of the saints is to miss God and His purpose, and to leave ourselves spiritually vulnerable and poor, having misunderstood the riches of Christ and our true inheritance.

So sonship is walking with God yes, but it is also walking with people. It is honouring God the father, yes. And it is also honouring and walking with people on earth who are spiritual fathers. Being a spiritual son is having the heart of sonship in you towards others, especially your fathers in the faith, and your leaders. This heart is the heart of Christ.

## **Chapter 9 – What About Spiritual Mothers and Daughters?**

As people have heard talk of spiritual fathering and spiritual sons, the question has inevitably risen, what about spiritual mothers and daughters? The simple answer is that the language of fathers and sons is inclusive, and includes women and girls in every way. This is the Bible pattern and example, and the language which we also follow.

The Bible language used to describe these things is almost exclusively “father” and “son”. Concerning God and Christ, this must never be changed, but in the church there has to be some understanding, for scripturally, all believers, men and women, boys and girls, are *sons* of God. Furthermore, we are considered first-born sons (Hebrews 12:23), since we are in Christ. If we were not counted as first-born sons, we could not share a joint inheritance with Christ, it would instead be a partial inheritance. But we are joint heirs, and each of us, with Him, inherits all the Father has.

In addition (because God loves to use analogies) the Church is the “Bride of Christ” and that includes all the men and the boys too. The language used in Scripture is always inclusive like this. We believe that if women are ok to be sons, then the men should be ok to be included as the bride also. The language is used to help us understand.

Furthermore, the apostle John refers to all believers as being either infants, children, young men, or fathers. In a book like the Spirit of Sonship, or in these articles which summarise that book, you would soon grow tired of reading, if in every place that required personal pronouns I recorded he/she, or him/her, and if, instead of simply saying “sons” it was always 'sons and daughters', or where required, 'fathers and mothers'.

We have simply taken the liberty of speaking using Bible terminology, and we trust that the reader of these articles, or the Spirit of Sonship book itself, simply put yourself into the picture on each page, so as to aid simplicity and directness of communication.

So let it be clearly stated that women are included and have a great part in what Christ is doing. The language is meant to include them and we trust they will feel included.

## **Chapter 10 – Generational Blessing.**

All our lives we have heard the word 'blessing'. The subject of blessing is mentioned in the Bible about 600 times, and its opposite, cursing, about 200 times. That makes this subject a major theme of the Scriptures. Whilst we have heard much about curses and their power, and how to pray against them, blessing remains a much misunderstood subject and has been taught little.

A blessing is a pronouncement which imparts spiritual power, opening the way for us in life, giving us approval and confidence, and power for us to succeed; it is grace to enable us to become what we are meant to become, and to achieve what we are meant to achieve.

To amplify that, a blessing is a form of words, often spoken by someone in authority, that imparts, enables and helps you to achieve and overcome. Do you not think that you just might need a blessing? And man, having been made in the image of God, also has the power to both bless and curse. Jesus said that we were to bless even our enemies. Paul said that we were to bless and not curse. The power of blessing is meant to be expressed by each of us in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What then is generational blessing?

This is a term that defines a certain kind of blessing – one which flows from one generation to the next. A generational blessing is that which passes from father to son, a blessing which, when carried by one generation, can and should be passed on to another. Very often, if you do not receive that blessing by impartation, it is lost.

Understand then, that amongst the most important blessing you can ever receive is a father's blessing. And by extension, the leaders Christ appoints as the shepherds of the flock, especially when mature, have an important role to play as fathers in the faith.

In the section about spiritual fathers, we already discussed the power and influence of a father. When a father speaks approval and blessing, spiritual power flows, and even the Son of God needed to hear the voice of His Father (at His baptism).

Virtually all blessing in the Bible is of a generational nature. Even the blessing of salvation by faith in Christ has a strong generational aspect. The Bible puts a great importance upon the blessing of Abraham being passed to Isaac, then to Jacob; then to his 12 sons – and then proclaims that the blessing of Abraham comes to every believer in Christ.

The obvious fact here is that Isaac could only receive the blessing from Abraham. There was no other person who was going to provide that blessing. Jacob could only receive a blessing from Isaac, and in fact he coveted the greater blessing so much as to deceive to get it. Esau despised the birthright, and as a result also lost the blessing, and earned the title as the only man God hates.

(Romans 9:13)

Generational blessing comes from a father. It cannot come from any person. Esau despised the birthright (the inheritance of his father) and therefore dishonoured his father. He received no blessing. Many believers today despise the source of their inheritance in the faith, and receive no blessing from the only place they can get it, that is their spiritual father/s.

However when a believer recognises their spiritual father and honours them, then like Jacob they are able to receive not only the birthright of inheritance, but also a great generational blessing.

It is common to honour in our heart, the Wesleys, Luthers, Zinzendorfs and Calvins of this world, but have no respect or little regard for the pastor who faithfully teaches us each week and prays for us each night in his home. When we think little of the spiritual leaders we have been given, we despise our birthright and lose our blessing.

That is why the spirit of sonship is essential to receiving generational blessing. When we have the heart of a son, that loves, honours and respects, we open our heart towards them and are able to receive from Christ.

Inheritance belongs to sons. If you want an inheritance from God, you need to have the heart of a son within you. Generational blessing will go to sons. These thoughts remind us that doing things the way Christ did them is the only way to life.

## **Chapter 11 – Apostolic Blessing.**

Apostolic blessing is a type of blessing that is needed and important. This blessing comes from apostles and comes with power as a result of apostolic authority and anointing. It is for the blessing, enriching, strengthening, and protecting of the saints.

In the Old Testament, the Lord commanded Moses to give a certain form of words to Aaron the High Priest and his sons. They were to command these words over Israel every day.

*“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Tell Aaron and his sons, “This is how you are to bless the Israelites, Say to them: ‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.’”’ So they will put my name on the Israelites and I will bless them.”* (Numbers 6:22-27)

You could ask why this blessing was needed. Israel had the covenants, the promises, the priesthood, the tabernacle, the offerings and sacrifices, the ark of the covenant, and the cloud of glory. The presence of God was in the camp. Yet this blessing was commanded to be spoken daily.

The Lord said this was a placing of His name upon His people, and as a result, He would bless His people. It is very clear. God gives responsibility and power to anointed leaders to place God's blessing upon God's people.

Do you think we have less power and less grace under the new covenant than in the Old Testament? As you know, in the Gospel we have more power and a greater grace, as well as better and more precious promises. (Hebrews 8:6)

Seeing that under the Old Covenant specific words were given to be a source of life and blessing,

are there any such words for us in the Church, under the New Covenant? Of course, and we find them recorded in book after book of the New Testament. They are at the beginning and end of nearly every single epistle. These words are *grace and peace*. There are a variety of ways in which the apostles expressed them, there was no set formula because the apostles had authority to command these blessings, and freedom of expression in doing so.

Paul ends the Ephesian letter with, “*Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*” (Ephesians 6:23-24) This is just one example.

There are probably no more powerful words in all the faith of Jesus Christ than these two, except for His name. Within peace (the word Shalom) are nearly every blessing imaginable including prosperity, health, and long life. In addition peace is tangible and can be felt. It is a real blessing. And grace is power and impartation and ability, given by God, not merited or earned but free to the humble to enable them to do everything. It's no wonder that by combining peace and grace we have nearly every imaginable blessing possible.

Blessing is an apostolic duty, and the apostle has been given specific authority to bless. Apostolic blessing and life and power – there is nothing else quite like it in the church. This is the way God has designed it, and this is the way it has been from the beginning.

Every believer should seek the blessing of their fathers, both natural and spiritual. If you no longer have your natural father with you, then ask the pastor or apostle who is over you in the Lord to take the place of your father, lay hands up you, and give you the blessing you never received.

Every ministry should seek to receive the ministry and the blessings of apostles of Christ. Jesus said to His apostles, “He who receives you receives me.” (Matthew 10:40)

## **Chapter 12 – How to Pursue a Spiritual Father.**

There are many who pray with a desire to receive what Elisha received, a double portion of the Spirit. However such double portions are the inheritance of sons. Elisha received a double portion because he served Elijah and pursued him and learned his ways, and then received double the spirit of Elijah.

A son pursues! Why does a son pursue a spiritual father? The heart of a son, and the outcomes of this pursuit, are uniquely illustrated in the story of Elisha.

People tend to think that Elisha followed and served Elijah so as to receive the prophet's mantle, but the Bible tells us that God spoke to Elijah and said, “*anoint Elisha... to succeed you as prophet.*” (1 Kings 19:16) So Elisha was already chosen. He was given the call, and both the ministry and grace was already available. He didn't have to pursue Elijah to obtain it as he was already offered it up front.

But something in Elisha's heart knew to pursue the older man. He followed Elijah and became his servant. From that time he cooked his food, carried his water, and washed his hands. He waited upon him and served him.

On the day Elijah was to leave, he tried to leave Elisha behind, saying, “*Stay here, the Lord has sent me to Bethel.*” (2 Kings 2:2) But Elisha replied, “*As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I*

*will not leave you.*” So they walked on together. This happened three times with the same reply from Elisha each time.

This was a test of Elisha's heart. And such tests come to all of us. Tests usually look innocuous, and they have to be for them to be real tests of the heart. Ponder these things carefully, for there is divine mystery here. And take warning also! Each of us is meant to be about the business of pursuing – of seeking the greater grace of God.

It is in this pursuing and seeking from the heart that lies the key to the double portion.

In the story of the taking away of Elijah, as he was leaving Elisha cried out, *“My Father! My Father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!”* This was a deeply emotional experience for Elisha. As he said this he tore his clothes and his heart was rent too. Elisha was not someone waiting for Elijah to go, so he could get the inheritance (like some sons) but rather was a son who loved his father so much, that his father's leaving was a sad time.

Elisha had a desire to be with his spiritual father, and it is this desire which caused him to pursue him. Spiritual sons must cultivate the longing to be with their fathers, and out of this kind of heart comes true inheritance and the double portion.

How to pursue a spiritual father, is a question answered in the heart. It requires resolve to do something, and take responsibility. It requires depth of feeling, the right heart. It requires “seeing our fathers” (like Elisha did when Elijah was taken) which means knowing them and recognising the grace they have. It requires being willing to put them first. All of these factors are part of pursuing a spiritual father, and out of this pursuit comes a double portion. However, seeking the double portion is not the objective for that leaves the son empty-handed. But seeking to serve, love and know, brings the blessing.

### **Chapter 13 – The Orphan Heart.**

It's hard to place a value on growing up with two parents who love you. Orphans often grow up deprived of key relationships and develop differently as adults, seeing the world in a different way. A person such as this, even though they may understand why, still struggles with their feelings and thoughts in a way that others never do.

In addition, sometimes people grow up with parents of varying abilities and care, and yet somehow are orphans in their hearts towards others, and especially towards leadership. We call this the orphan heart, and others have called it the orphan spirit. It's not the kind of spirit you can cast out because its actually the person themselves and the way they think and see themselves and the world around them.

Such a person is disconnected from others, finds it hard to trust people, especially leaders, and often struggles with feeling inadequate, has low self-esteem and may feel resentment, bitterness and other negative emotions. It can be hard for them to relax around spiritual leaders and to “give the heart” because their feelings don't let them. They are an orphan in the heart, even though in practical terms they were not an orphan.

Apostle Chuck Clayton used to tell the story of when in his younger years in the ministry, he had a large church full of fine people who would do anything he asked of them. They were prepared to work hard. They would clean buildings and work on the church grounds. They would participate in

meetings and work at all aspects of the ministry. But Chuck could not understand why he felt he could never really trust them. He had puzzled for years why this was so, but later came to realise why. They had never given him their hearts!

Without the giving of our hearts to each other, trust is not established and intimacy cannot grow. Without the giving of the heart there is no sonship. Without the giving of the heart, we have not laid aside our own agendas. Without the giving of the heart there is always room for an Absalom to arise, who deceives people, or steals away the ministry. You cannot build a work for God, you cannot build community, without the giving of the heart to each other in love, acceptance, and honour.

You may have sung a popular worship song in church with these words: *“Come, now is the time to worship, now is the time to give your heart.”*

Most people think that we must give our hearts to Christ and then we are born again, and yet the message of sonship, and the whole new wineskin God is building goes further. We must give our hearts to each other. Jesus said, *“A new command I give to you, love one another.” (John 13:34)* This is the giving of the heart, and it is all about fellowship with each other, as well as fellowship with God.

For people who struggle with fear of intimacy, self-esteem issues, and other feelings of rejection, there needs to be an acknowledgement of these issues, so that they can begin healing. In our church we have a number of stories of people who have miraculously overcome the orphan heart. These victories are possible when there is recognition, prayer, and willingness to work at something. The orphan heart can be conquered, even though it is often a process.

Jesus said, *“I will not leave you as orphans,” (John 14:18)* and the desire and the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to work in you, and in your people, to bring them to a place of security, where they can give the heart without fear. God's blessing is in this.

There is much more information on this topic available in “The Spirit of Sonship” by John Alley, and also in other books by authors such as Jack Frost.

## **Chapter 14 – It's Not Real Until You Give The Heart.**

God is a relational God – that's why He is in relationship as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is a God who loves (John 3:16) and a God who said we were to love one another *“as I have loved you.”* (John 13:34) Following Christ is not about external commands and observances, even though we do try to live a life that pleases God in all we do. Rather we have a faith that is about fellowship with God and with one another. And because we give the heart to Christ and to each other, it does change all we do. We will want to demonstrate our love for Him and for our fellow believers.

Because our walk with God is about the heart, we are also supposed to walk with one another with genuine feeling for each other. Brotherly love (affection) is supposed to be in and between our church congregations, it should be normal. Enoch walked with God and was no more because God took him. He got so close to God that it was just natural to be with God, so he was taken. That is where we are all supposed to be. And, we are supposed to walk with each other with one heart and one mind.

In a typical church there is an outward working unity. Most church congregations do work together,

run programs, help the poor, and do things to advance the Kingdom. However that is no guarantee of what is in the heart of the same people. Many corporations, businesses, sporting teams and other organisations also have an outward effective unity. The disciples of Christ, prior to the Day of Pentecost, were people who worked together with Christ as their unifying point, but they didn't have brotherly love for each other. In other words, they hadn't given the heart to each other. The Scriptures contain stories of their independence, pride, argumentative natures, and examples of trying to promote themselves first. All of this was despite the fact that they worked together unified by a common cause.

Christ taught them that the first in the Kingdom was the one who humbled himself, and put others first. The early believers had no ability however to do as Christ instructed until the giving of the Holy Spirit. After the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit brought change to them and they recognised the Body of Christ, they saw each other and they gave their hearts. They suddenly belonged to each other and cared. Finally they had love that was real and alive. They had power to do as Christ instructed. Their devotion was now to each other, as well as to Christ.

The typical church congregation has not experienced these type of things on a corporate level, where everyone comes into it together. We all know of believers who exhibit brotherly love and have grace for serving, and it's real for them. However in our experience, this is rare to see in an entire congregation.

What we are looking for is the “Spirit of Sonship” to come upon all of God's people, and bring the kind of change we saw on the day of Pentecost. Such things are possible, and have happened through history when people sought God, recognizing their need. However, these same people also had to give the heart. This is a choice each person makes, and is part of where God is trying to bring each individual believer.

In church there are people who serve, and work hard, and these people are needed in churches all over the world. Without them churches would not function, and yet many of them do these jobs without giving the heart to their fellow man, or their pastors. Let your jobs and work be done for God, but also do it for your pastor, and your brothers and sisters. Do it to love them, do it for them to bless them, do it because you decide you will care for them. Give the heart, make a conscious choice to be a blessing to others even if nothing comes back.

Do that, and you'll sow a seed for something different in the Body of Christ for the future, and for you too. Plus... when you really decide to do it for someone else because you love them, now you have found the key and it is really being done for God. (Matt 25:45)

## **Chapter 15 – Honouring Spiritual Leadership.**

*“...respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work.” (1 Thess 5:12-13)*

Honour is the lifeblood of community and relationships. Without honour there is no 'giving' in relationships, and the place of honour is instead filled with the dead weight of alternative attitudes and opinions which pull down and keep the church's common life at the low ebb of assumptions, pride, faint praise, cynicism, and independence.

The Scriptures are clear enough *“Honour one another above yourselves,”* (Romans 12:10) and, *“The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honour, especially those*

*whose work is preaching and teaching.*” (1 Timothy 5:17) There is an important place for honour in the Body of Christ, and doubly important towards spiritual leadership.

We cannot appreciate, respect, and honour leaders over us if we do not fully know them, understand them, and willingly share and participate in their works. Honour is also not honour unless it has a practical dimension. What are their needs? We must help to meet them. What are their struggles? We must carry the burden of prayer for them. What kinds of things do they like? We can seek to be a blessing to them. What kind of friendship and support would they appreciate? We must be there for them.

The literal meaning of the giving of honour is to add wealth. The literal meaning of the Greek word Paul used for honour, when he said the elders who direct the affairs of the church well are “*worthy of double honour*” is “*diploous*”, which refers to a value of money paid, and by analogy, to esteem of the highest degree. We should not be frightened to be personally very generous in our dealings with our spiritual fathers – and it is often the means of opening the heavens to our own blessing, as I have discovered.

But we should also be aware that by properly honouring those over us in our actions and speech, we are adding value to them in other ways. Our words and our attitude can make them richer than they were before. This is the principle of honour.

The Scriptures say that, “*A son honours his father...*” (Malachi 1:6) And in the life of Christ we see examples of His honour towards His father in Heaven by the way He lived, referred to, prayed to, talked about, and spoke highly of His Father in Heaven. We need to follow the example of Christ toward our spiritual fathers.

How did Timothy feel about Paul, and how did he serve him? How did Timothy “see” Paul? What were Timothy's attitudes and values in serving Paul? What about Elisha towards Elijah? What about Joshua towards Moses? Was there honour in his heart towards him? The Bible shows us that Joshua served giving the whole heart being yielded, faithful, devoted, and a man of passion. (Exodus 24:13, 33:11, Numb 11:28-29, 27:18)

Do you think that Joshua, Timothy, or Elisha were any poorer for displaying honour? Do you think you will be poorer if you display honour towards your leaders and serve them? In addition, do you think your leaders will be richer as a result, and will be able to lead you better too?

There are other ways a son honours a father. A son is not ashamed of his father. A son honours his father by being teachable and by listening. A son thinks about what his father says and holds it in the heart as being important.

Consider honour. Consider Christ. Consider those over you in the Lord.

## **Chapter 16 – Relational Boundaries.**

Very often when new understanding breaks upon the Church, believers preach, teach, and organise themselves in line with that new understanding. But sometimes a movement goes too far, or grasps new ideas with incomplete understanding, and so there may be unintended consequences. People mean well, but find there are some unexpected outcomes which have to be corrected.

With a breakthrough in understanding regarding sonship, and the relational aspect of Christianity,

here are some guidelines to prevent things going to far and becoming what they were never intended to be.

1. The Place of Jesus. In all we do, we seek to know Christ, reveal Christ and love the way Christ loved. In everything we do in relationships, it must continue to be this way.
2. The Brotherhood Context. Even though we teach father-son relationships in the church, and encourage believers to see themselves as a son who should walk with a father in the ministry, we must also be clear that the Church is principally a brotherhood. These ideas are not exclusive and don't push each other out. So no matter what your position in the Body, you are loved, you are accepted, you are honoured, and you are equal. You are no less in Christ if you don't have a spiritual father or son, or haven't experienced these things yourself.
3. Careful Speech and Terminology. The use of the words father and son is only needed to describe how it works. It's not needed, and shouldn't be used in real life for titles, or referring to people. The important thing is the relationship itself. Jesus also said not to call anyone Father, so it also emphasizes this important point. When praying for someone who may be a spiritual son or something, we always refer to them as our brother or sister in the Lord. We don't make things hierarchical, we are equals, and we include people and love them with our language too.
4. Don't Make Claims Over People. This is mainly for leaders. Don't claim to be somebody's father, or the right to be their father, and don't go around claiming sons. Just be a father if you are one, and serve them, at least until your personal maturity, and the genuineness of your relationship is evident and established.
5. Principle of Freedom. Allow room for people to come and go and to serve, try to serve and to fail. Give people space, don't control them or put on them burdens, hierarchical demands or impose systems.
6. Relationships are Inclusive, not Exclusive. We are not locking people out of "special relationships" that they cannot be a part of. We include people, make them loved and welcome. We are a family, the Body of Christ. Nobody who seeks God is denied belonging.
7. Sonship is a Grace and not a duty. We are not forcing people into sonship. No-one *has* to do this.

In the end it is all about love. The father-son concept (sonship) is really seeking to see God and be like God. Not everyone gets it this way, and we seek to love all and include all people no matter if they understand, agree, or not. We are all God's family and we belong to each other.

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### **About the Author**

David Alley works for Peace Apostolic Ministries and serves John Alley as not only a biological son but a spiritual son in the kingdom of God. David started in the ministry as a pastor at the age of 19 and continues to serve with a big heart for evangelism, missions and the gospel. David also runs a web hosting business hosting both business and church clients from 3 continents. David is married to Marie who is from California, and they have 7 children.

### **More Books by David:**

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