

The Need for Spiritual Fathers

Jack and Trisha Frost

Our children were hiding in their rooms with hearts full of fear and concern just an hour before the weekly girl's meeting Trisha was to lead in our church. She was overwhelmed with tears and negative emotions focused at me from all the strife around our home and the never-ending anxiety we lived with from trying to get our needs for love and acceptance met through ministry. It was 1984, and we were just passing 30 years of age. We had been born again less than five years. We were straight out of Bible school and totally unprepared and unqualified to pastor the small holiness church in Conway, South Carolina.



Right at that moment, while my wife was telling me through her pain what I was full of for not being sensitive to her needs, a light rap was heard on our front door. Peering through the window, we saw a little old lady patiently waiting to be received. Trisha and I looked at each other for a sign of recognition, but there was none. Wiping the tears from her eyes, Trisha opened the door asking, "May I help you?"

The frail, gray-haired lady in her 70's responded, "Perhaps you can! My Father had me go for a drive and as I passed by this house, He said that there was someone inside who needed me to pray with them!" Without even asking permission, she reached out and took our hands in hers and started talking to her Father just as if He were present, and His hands joined with ours. She asked Him to express His tender comfort, love, and grace to us. In the midst of our shock, Trisha and I suspiciously glanced at one another, each thinking we were set up for this by the other. Soon, we both realized that neither knew this very strange but peaceful and gentle woman.

For ten minutes, standing just inside the doorway, she talked with her Father about our needs, just as if she had been in our home during the previous weeks of turmoil and strife. The manifest presence of God's love began melting our questioning, stubborn hearts and relieved our fears and tension as tears of comfort and peace began to freely flow down our cheeks. Then as quickly as she had entered into our lives, she said "Amen!" and hurriedly turned, got in her car, and drove away. She did not even leave us her name. With the anxiety now turned to a serene calm, Trisha lovingly looked into my eyes and said, "God sends angels your way sometimes!"

For several days our home was filled with peace, but we soon drifted back into the strife, anxiety, and fear. It looked as if we would not last six months as pastors before we would destroy each other, our children, and those few at our little church who were hardened enough to endure the angry edge in my preaching. Then one evening, the phone rang during the supper hour. As I answered, I recognized the voice of the angel that God had sent our way weeks before: "Our Father has told my husband and I that if we do not help you, you will not last much longer. He has brought you to this town to be a light and to heal and restore the brokenhearted. Through you, He will create a feast upon which all this community shall feed. But first, you must be fed! We have a

banquet prepared in your honor. Here are the directions to our house... You and your wife, be here tomorrow at noon and stay until 2:00 PM." She abruptly hung up without even giving her name.

More out of curiosity than anything else, Trisha and I found ourselves the next day driving down the dirt road that led to an old, dilapidated home with a yard in much need of work. As this fragile little lady welcomed us into her home, she introduced herself as Grandma Causey, and then said, "This is my husband, D.B., or Dearly Beloved, as I call him." He was a gentle, quiet, and unassuming elderly man.

She led us into a dining room cluttered with Bibles and Christian books where we saw the dinner table set with saltine crackers, cold rice, Spam, and a glass of cold water. D.B. blessed the feast and we dove into one of the most satisfying meals we had ever eaten. Grandma Causey began telling of how much they had been fasting and praying for us in the past few weeks. Father had told them of the many things they were to share with us about His ways. It did not take long for Trisha and me to realize that the "banquet" prepared for us was not the Spam and rice, but the most intimate mysteries of the Father's Kingdom of love, joy, and peace. During the next two hours, Trisha and I often glanced at one another, stunned and speechless as we felt like we had entered into Father's house – a place secured in love, acceptance, affirmation, and comfort. Neither of us had ever felt so safe and at home. This couple wanted nothing from us but to impart a lifetime of intimate experiences and the relationship they had shared in the Father's presence.

Precisely at 2:00 PM, Grandma said, "It is time for you to leave. We have other children coming soon. When the Father gives us a word for you, we will call and tell you when to come again." Then they both laid their hands upon us and blessed us, calling forth God's presence upon our lives, marriage, and ministry. With tears welling up in our eyes and many unanswered questions in our hearts, we were quickly ushered out the door and soon on our way home, quietly contemplating the ramifications of what had just occurred.

For the next 20 months, two or three times a week for an hour or two at a time, we found ourselves at what we began to affectionately call "Grandma's house." We would sit at the feet of D.B. and Grandma, feasting upon the mysteries of intimacy with God. At times, we pleaded with them to teach us of the gifts of the Spirit, but they would always tenderly respond with, "You need to know God's ways before you know His acts!" Their home became the Father's house to us. Weekly, we were admonished, encouraged, loved, affirmed, edified, and blessed before we were sent on our way. It became the safest and most comforting place we had ever known as we were fathered and mothered by two aged and often infirmed saints.

This was spiritual fathering. Before they came into our lives, we were like spiritual orphans, fighting and striving to find significance and identity through pastoring a church of orphans. The Father saw our need: "I will not leave you as orphans, but I will come to you" (John 14:18). He came to us in the form of two uncomely, impoverished, and humbled saints – but as they entered into our lives, we had to be willing to lower our walls of skepticism, doubt, and fear of being used or manipulated and be willing to receive them as a spiritual mother and father in our lives. Within months of opening our hearts to them, our little holiness church began to experience many new salvations and tripled in size in a year and a half. Each Sunday, we simply fed the people from the

banquet table that was set for us at Grandma's house. We never would have survived another year in ministry without them. For the first time in our marriage, we had a safe place to open up our pain. How would we ever have become a fruitful spiritual father and mother to others if we had not first been a son and daughter to someone else?

The day came in 1986 when they called and said, "Father has given us a very special word for you. Please come at noon tomorrow." We were so excited at what the Father had for us, but we had learned before at Grandma's house that God's word does not always come in the form we would like. This was one of those times, as Grandma said, "No longer do we call you our children; we now call you our friends! You have matured, and there are others more in need than you that we must care for. It is time for our children to become parents themselves. We will not be calling you to return. God will send others to take you into different dimensions in God's ways." They blessed us and sent us on our way as if a mother had pushed her young out of the nest to fly for the first time on their own.

Many times, we sought to return as needy children, but they would only receive us as friends. They knew the time must come for all children to learn to trust the heavenly Father to meet their deepest needs for love and affirmation. They were right, though it was scary at first. Soon, the Father sent others in our town, Pastors Phillip and Lynn Miles, to help nurture and lead us into other areas of the Kingdom we had not known before.

Even now as we write about it, we are overwhelmed with tears of thanksgiving and gratitude for D.B. and Grandma. For several years now they have been promoted to glory. But in 1989, as their strength was fading, they called us and said, "Father has revealed that we are to pass our mantle on to you!" By phone, they blessed us and prayed that their vision and anointing for spiritual fathering would be imparted to us. They passed on their inheritance to us. Their lifelong vision was to build a retreat center – a safe place, a place of healing and restoration where pastors and leaders from the nations could come and be accepted, loved, healed, and equipped to take the Father's healing love to the world. They never saw their vision come to pass. They rarely traveled beyond South Carolina. They had no more than a little decrepit home in the woods. But through their spiritual children, they are impacting the nations of the earth. For 11 years now, Shiloh Place Ministries has carried their vision to every inhabited continent. We now have 45 acres upon which the retreat center is being built for the healing and restoration of leaders. They are coming from the nations looking for a home, a safe place to belong. Dearly Beloved and Grandma Causey received this vision more than 50 years ago and it is being fulfilled today through the many members of the Shiloh Place staff and ministry team who are their spiritual grandchildren. This is the power of just one spiritual father and mother to touch the nations with the Father's love.

How do the 70% of pastors who do not have anyone they call a close friend or confidant survive in ministry? At what table do they feed so that they can feed those placed under their care? There are so many pastors, people, and churches stunted in their growth and maturity because we have not many fathers and mothers. Could this be why only one out of every 40 people who enter the ministry in their early years actually retires a minister? Why 80% of seminary graduates who enter the ministry straight out of school leave the ministry within five years, never to return again? Why 80% of

pastors and 84% of their spouses are depressed or discouraged? Why 95% of pastors do not pray with their spouses? Why 40% of pastors end up in affairs? Why so many leaders are into aggressive striving, competition, and rivalry in ministry as they fight and wrangle to obtain an inheritance because they have not received spiritual fathers to pass inheritance down to them? Is not the number one need in ministry today the need for true spiritual fathers and mothers? Whose son or daughter are you? "For if you were to have countless tutors in Christ, yet you would not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." (1 Corinthians 4:15 NAS)

In the Father's love,
Jack & Trisha Frost

*Statistics given were gathered from Charisma Magazine, Pastor To Pastor, and CBN.

For further study

We recommend Jack's book "Spiritual Slavery To Spiritual Sonship" and the CD series "From Slavery To Sonship."

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