

Tuesday, September 10, 2024

Session 1—Introduction to Spiritual Fathering

“Restoring the Ancient Order of Discipleship”

Premise: Engaging a younger man in a meaningful relationship will not only change his life and yours, but will build the Kingdom of God.

The Need: Young men today are in crisis, both spiritually and relationally. The cultural, fatherhood, and discipleship gaps are widening. Church attendance and spiritual growth among men aged 18-45 have been in decline.

Young men today face deep loneliness and lack meaningful connections. Social media and technology create superficial relationships, while real-world interactions are rare. The absence of spiritual fathers or positive male role models exacerbates the problem.

The role of a spiritual father is essential. It's about bridging these gaps and helping younger men connect with Christ and their community. Many older men feel unequipped, but if you love Christ and care for younger men, you are qualified.

“Historically one of the most diverse and free places for faith, the U.S. is now the 12th least religious country in the world.”

“There has never been a generation of men with *more* resources and *less* nurturing.”

“Only 28% of Christians say they are engaged in any type of discipleship.”

Key Points:

- ⇒ *Younger men are suffering from a lack of fathering.*
- ⇒ *Many younger men are expressing a desire for a Spiritual Father.*
- ⇒ *Young men are hyperconnected by technology, but their relationships are superficial, and their belief in truth is undermined.*
- ⇒ *While many mature Christian men understand the need to be discipling someone else, they often feel unequipped and unqualified.*

Discussion:

1. What do you think young men need the most today?
2. When you hear the term “spiritual father,” how does that make you feel? (e.g., eager, anxious, sad, hopeful, etc.)? Why?
3. Have you ever had a spiritual father? Who? How did he help you? If not, do you wish you had?
4. Have you ever served as a spiritual father (mentor, spiritual coach, guide)? What were some highs and lows of that experience?

The Role: A spiritual father is more than a teacher or mentor. He is someone who walks alongside a younger man, sharing life experiences—both successes and failures. This relationship is built on mutual trust and affection.

Spiritual Fathering can be compared to being a mountain guide. A guide doesn't just give a map or instructions—he accompanies the climber on the journey, sharing wisdom and experience, and helping navigate difficult terrain.

Paul's relationship with Timothy is used as a model: reminding Timothy of his identity in Christ, encouraging him to use his gifts, and guiding him in godly living. Similarly, spiritual fathers are called to help young men discover their purpose and strengthen their walk with Christ.

“Engaging your faith in new ways will energize and grow you more fully into who God created you to be—lacking nothing and equipped to disciple others.”

“The biblical model we want to adopt for discipleship includes guiding and going with someone; it's Jesus' model when He said, ‘Come, follow me.’”

Key Points:

- ⇒ Discipleship is about more than head knowledge—for both you and your spiritual son.
- ⇒ The father-son relationship produces mutual growth.
- ⇒ The keys to being an effective spiritual father are not skills or talent; they are love and trust.
- ⇒ Humility is more powerful than perfection when it comes to guiding a younger man.
- ⇒ Your life experiences—both the successes and failures—are invaluable to a man who is further behind you on the journey.
- ⇒ Part of being a faithful spiritual father is doing your best to model the Christian life through integrity (a one-to-one correlation between my Bible, my beliefs, and my behavior), accuracy (Imitating Christ), and focus (on the Gospel).

Discussion:

1. Have you ever had another Christian man give you rules and correction outside of relationship? How did it make you feel?
2. What skills do you think older men need most to father younger men?
3. What personal skills or experiences of yours might be helpful to a spiritual son?
4. What is a failure or struggle you experienced that might've been avoided if you'd had a spiritual father to guide you?

Resources:

- Chapters 1 and 2 in *The Spiritual Fathers Guidebook*
- A New Day of Discipleship—<https://vimeo.com/844983959>
- www.spiritualfathers.com