

# **Apostolic Fathers and Spiritual Bastards**

*A Biblical Review of the  
Essential Ministry Father  
Doctrine*

Roger Sapp

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# Preface

In early 1998, I spent a good part of a month in another country traveling and doing team ministry in pastor's conferences in various locations. Five of the individuals on the team were men in some sort of full-time pastoral or apostolic ministry. During that month, I heard messages from several of these men that begin to awaken me to the doctrine that I am addressing in this book. I came back home with a few questions and problems I discerned in this teaching. I actually wrote notes on this teaching in the back of the Bible that I presently use. At the time, I was completing a book on women in ministry and did not give this doctrine much thought after coming home.

A month later, I was at a conference south of the Dallas/Fort Worth area and heard a nationally known minister teaching some very similar things and using many similar words. This particular minister was promoting the ministry of the man who was hosting this conference. He used the apostle Paul and Timothy and others as examples of ministry fathers and sons. His most striking statement in the message was:

*Any Christian who doesn't have a spiritual father is a spiritual bastard.*

He was encouraging all attendees present to get into an intimate relationship with the conference host. As I was driving home, I was thinking about what he had taught and the Holy Spirit spoke a few words to me. The Spirit said:

*Who was Paul's spiritual father?*

These words began a chain of revelation that had me thinking about the implications of these words and meditating on Scripture for several weeks. As a result, I began to see serious problems with this teaching.

In the middle of 1998, I finished the book on women in ministry. During that period, through a number of providential events, I came into possession of four new books that all taught this extreme doctrine. However, three out of the four books presented it in a less radical fashion than I was hearing it verbally taught. The fourth book convinced me that it was the "fountainhead" of much of the heretical teaching that I was hearing. During that same season, I discovered that many of my friends had been given the "fountainhead" book by various leaders trying to recruit them and unfortunately, some had accepted this teaching as the gospel. As a result, I prayerfully decided that a written review and response to this teaching was necessary. I trust that you will find it thought provoking.

For the Bridegroom and His preparing Bride,

Roger Sapp

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## A Popular Heresy

### **Ministry Fathers and Sons**

There is a very popular but extreme message about *ministry fathers and sons* being proclaimed throughout portions of the Church today. It is popular for several reasons. *First of all*, there is an important balanced truth about the need for mature men who can be spiritual fathers in the Body of Christ coming forth in this day. The author feels so strong about this that he published a book about apostolic ministry in 1995. Unfortunately, what we are dealing with in this review is not this balanced truth but an unhealthy distortion of it. This distortion can become confused with the biblical truth of discipling and relating to others in the Christian faith. Hopefully, this book will keep believers from overreacting to this distortion and missing the truth.

*Secondly*, this unscriptural message is popular with some leaders because it is an effective recruiting tool. Some men are using this message to produce guilt, fear, insecurity, and a sense of being inadequate in other believers in order to recruit them as followers. This takes unfair advantage of the legitimate needs of relationship and acceptance and preys upon the fear of rejection that all of us have in varying degrees.

Many believers have a sense of inferiority often coming from unresolved shame and guilt and often less than positive relationships with their natural fathers. As a result, many of these persons are easily manipulated by offering a promise of fathering. The promises those teaching this doctrine make of spiritual advancement and security allow these less confident believers to be recruited into a relationship that may not benefit them at all. In fact, this relationship may eventually disappoint, wound and harm them. Many of these leaders are actually recruiting emotional *slaves* and calling them *sons*. We will

examine the actual doctrine that is being used to recruit in detail in this work.

*Thirdly*, this message is popular because it includes a distorted teaching on tithing that produces a great deal of unearned money for the recruiter. This too is a distortion of the balanced, biblical truth of tithing. For example, a minister teaching this doctrine has more than forty ministries personally paying him a tithe of their incomes in addition to his salary as pastor of a large church. You can understand why this minister continues to preach and believe this message. His income coming from the tithe alone is four times the average income of those who are tithing to him. He has prospered greatly, but it is unlikely that the forty ministries are getting their money's worth of attention from this man. What's wrong with this particular teaching on tithing? Among other things, it promises something that it cannot really deliver. We will examine this doctrine on the tithe in more detail later in this work.

### **Difficult But Necessary Correction**

It is always difficult but necessary to address doctrinal error in the Church. In our day, there are various criticisms directed at anyone that attempts to bring the truth to light. One of these criticisms is that the servant of God needs to be more "positive". It is difficult to appear to be "positive" when a heresy is being addressed in specific terms. However, Jesus Christ addressed error in teaching and practice and did not feel the pressure to remain "positive". The apostle Paul addressed the doctrines of false teachers, false apostles and false prophets in specific ways and did not remain "positive" either. Many times the Old Testament prophets were less than "positive" in their messages to Israel and yet pleased God. Therefore, the author is in good company when he rejects the modern idea that he must remain "positive" in order to do this necessary corrective work.

A second problem occurs when addressing false doctrine. It is understandably difficult for those teaching the false doctrine not

to take it personally when someone points it out. Those teaching the particular error will react to correction in various ways, sometimes even attacking the person attempting to address the error. They can question the author's motives and character rather than focusing on what the correction offers in the way of truth.

Since the doctrine that we are analyzing in this book concerns relationships between men of God, it is possible that some will wrongly assume that the author has a problem in his own relationships. They may accuse the author of being bitter, resentful or hurt instead of assuming sincerity and truthfulness. They may wrongly assume that the author is writing out of personal pain rather than true concern and biblical revelation. The plain truth is that the author has had relatively normal relationships with other people in his family, in the workplace and the Church. A few relationships have been difficult but most have been good. Therefore, telling the truth may invite unfair criticism but there is no other real choice for a person desiring to be godly.

### **Defining Heresy**

The definitions for *heresy* found in Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words are interesting as we consider this doctrine. Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words, page 547, quoted in part says:

*Heresy (Greek: hairesis) denotes a choosing... especially a self-willed opinion, which is substituted for submission to the power of truth, and leads to division and the formation of sects... such erroneous opinions are frequently the outcome of personal preference or the prospect of advantage.*

As we analyze this doctrine, we believe that it will be shown to be a *self-willed opinion* as described above. It produces observable *divisions* in the Church by creating unwholesome cult-like allegiance and dependence upon certain men. It is often taught because of a *prospect of advantage*. The *prospect of*

*advantage* is authority over others and the financial benefit that it produces.

This doctrine is extreme for several reasons. Like many popular "Christian" messages of the past, it has exalted a biblical truth to an extreme place where it has become the basis of serious errors in attitudes, relationships, practice, interpretation and doctrine. Therefore, the object of this review is to look at this doctrine in light of Scripture and to help equip believers find the proper balance.

Conversely, it is not our object to embarrass the men who are teaching this doctrine but to encourage them to a more biblical perspective on this matter. Therefore, we will not quote directly or identify these men in this book to avoid public embarrassment to them. We will, however, distill and summarize their written and spoken doctrine so that the reader may be equipped to deal with these extreme teachings when they read or hear them in public ministry.

### **Fundamental Concept: *Father to Son***

The fundamental concept of this doctrine is that an intimate relationship must exist between special Christian leaders and all other Christians for proper order in the Church. These leaders are referred to as *ministry fathers* in this doctrine. These other Christians, the followers, are called *ministry sons*. In this doctrine, this *ministry father to son* relationship is absolutely *essential*. No Christian can please God without being in this kind of relationship according to this doctrine and no believer is excluded. Everyone must have a *ministry father* or they are *orphans*, *illegitimate* and *bastards* according to this doctrine. This is why we have named this doctrine "*The Essential Ministry Father Doctrine*".

A *ministry father* is a male believer who has sufficient spiritual maturity to guide and correct a younger believer, a *son in ministry* for the purpose of bringing him to maturity and spiritual

fatherhood. In this doctrine, although not directly stated, that on occasion, a biological father might have sufficient maturity to be the *ministry father* to his biological son but not necessarily. Often, there is a serious confusion in this doctrine between ministry fathers and biological fathers. Often biblical passages relating to biological fathers are misused in teaching this doctrine to support the idea of ministry fathers.

What *fathering* means in this doctrine is an active preparation of a ministry son by teaching, encouragement, and correction until this son reaches a place of fathering himself. There is nothing particularly wrong with this idea at first examination. However, as in many things, the details are important. For instance, according to this doctrine, the process of preparation undertaken by a *ministry father* is what produces *legitimacy* in the ministry son. In this doctrine a believer cannot be complete or adequate without this kind of relationship.

### **Illegitimate Ministry or Spiritual Bastards**

*Illegitimate ministry* is frequently defined in this doctrine as ministry that has not been *fathered*. *Illegitimate ministry* is also less frequently but also clearly defined as ministry that does not *father* others. Many times individuals who are not being actively fathered are called *spiritual bastards* by many that teach this doctrine. Therefore, ministry fathers become the *salvation* of ministry sons *saving* them from being *spiritual bastards* in this heretical doctrine.

Beyond the fact that the terms *bastard* and *illegitimate* are insulting, inflammatory and unkind, is the fact that they are inappropriately used and improperly defined. Apparently those behind this doctrine do not understand what a bastard or illegitimacy actually is. However, these terms have worked in many cases to shame insecure believers into relationship with some of these men. Our hope is to expose this doctrine in the light of Scripture to prevent such manipulation in the future.

## Improper Definition of Bastard

Someone who is *illegitimate* or a *bastard* is someone who was born outside of the covenant of marriage. In other words, a bastard's parents were not married. A bastard is *not* someone who is *not being fathered* but the product of parents who were not in proper covenant relationship. In other words, a bastard or an illegitimate child is never at fault and has done nothing wrong. A son born without a relationship with his father is not a bastard or illegitimate unless his parents were unmarried. Likewise, a bastard or illegitimate child may have a wonderful relationship with his or her father. Webster's New World Dictionary, page 118, says this of the word *bastard*:

*Bastard* as a noun:

1. A person born of parents not married to each other; illegitimate child.
2. Anything spurious, inferior, or varying from standard.
3. A person regarded with contempt, hatred, pity, resentment, etc. or sometimes with playful affection: a vulgar usage.

*Bastard* as an adjective:

1. Of illegitimate birth or of uncertain origin.
2. Of a size or shape that differs from the normal or standard.
3. That which is not truly the designated thing but that closely resembles it.
4. Not genuine; sham; inferior.

Since those using this term are relating it to *fathering*, the first noun definition and the first adjective definition fit how this term is being used. The other negative ideas in the subsequent definitions are being used also. However, as we have already related, they are actually misapplying this term. Calling a Christian a *spiritual bastard* or *spiritually illegitimate* is misusing these unkind terms and is actually bringing insult to their parent who in this case is God, the Father. God, the Father has brought them to spiritual birth through faith in Jesus Christ and the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit.

## **Unreasonable Premise About God**

The logic of this doctrine is very weak. This weakness lies in that the doctrine subtly teaches that the *Father* brings to spiritual birth believers that have no *father*. Every true believer in Jesus Christ has been adopted into God's family and is a legitimate son or daughter of God on that basis. Nothing can be properly added or taken away from these biblical facts. God is Father to all those born of His Spirit. It is unreasonable to believe that God should make such a grievous mistake in bringing to birth those that He cannot care for. In other words, we are being told that *God produces bastard children. No!*

Occasionally, the word *orphan* is used to describe believers as well by those who propagate this doctrine. While not nearly as insulting, *orphan* is wrongly applied as well. Believers can only be *orphans* if God has died and Christ and the Holy Spirit have forsaken them. The promises of Scripture declare that this cannot happen. God does not produce *orphans* either.

The logic for the *orphan* argument is faulty in the same way that the *bastard* argument is faulty. God, the Father cannot and would not produce *orphans*. The Father cannot bring to birth those who have no father. God is a real father to His children despite all feelings and heretical messages to the contrary.

Believers may wrongly believe the condemnation of the devil about their true natures, but God receives them as beloved sons and daughters the moment that they believe. Believers are accepted, justified and set apart through the blood of Jesus. The lack of a human ministry father does not change the fact of their spiritual birth, the forgiveness of their sins, the indwelling presence of the Spirit, and the promises of Scripture. Feelings contrary to biblical facts are common but are not the truth for believers. Teaching, like this doctrine, that reinforces condemnation and feelings of inferiority and that does not

reinforce biblical truth needs to be strongly rejected by every believer.

Leaders teaching this doctrine are pointing to themselves as the solution for feelings of inadequacy rather than to Christ. Despite feelings to the contrary, believers already have in Christ everything that these ministry fathers are promising. Standing in faith will result in receiving all the things that Christ has purchased for them at Calvary. However, these leaders teach that believers will find these things of Christ through relationship with them.

Despite messages to the contrary, the hearts of believers may long for a father but it is not a ministry father that will satisfy them. They will not find rest and peace in human relationships. The only place where these believers will find the "father" their heart seeks is in direct and intimate fellowship with the Heavenly Father who loves them. Believers should never accept a substitute.

### **Shaming the Forgiven**

It is clear that the other definitions of *bastard* are also being applied to *shame* believers into these relationships. These definitions suggest that some who have believed in Christ are *inferior, shams, spurious, not genuine and vary from the norm* for the single reason of not having a *ministry father* or because in ministry they are not a *ministry father*. We will examine these negative claims about other believers to see if they hold up in light of biblical truth. We predict that they will not hold up under close scrutiny and will be proven to be an extreme, hurtful and manipulative error.

The fact of men trying to produce shame in those who Christ has made righteous by faith in His sacrifice is revealing. It is similar to the First Century Judaizers trying to shame the Gentile Christians because they did not keep the Law of Moses. These leaders want to add a requirement for righteousness beyond

receiving Christ as Lord and Savior. These men are telling us that the cross is not enough and this human relationship with a *ministry father* will make us "really" acceptable to God.

Many who are teaching this false doctrine are good hearted and sincere. However, they are sincerely wrong and must repent. There are also spiritual wolves that will use this false doctrine to benefit themselves. These men prey on the insecurity that many believers have. Rather than pointing younger believers to Christ as their sufficiency, these so-called ministry fathers recruit them with never to be fulfilled promises of spiritual inheritance received from serving and tithing to them. Rather than spiritual inheritance, what awaits most of these recruits is a series of disappointments and potential abuse when they want to depart from the ministry father.

Once a believer is conditioned to believe that faithfulness to God is actually faithfulness and emotional attachment to a man, that believer is in real trouble. Conditioned believers can be easily controlled and manipulated by fear and guilt. They may actually fear that departure from an abusive leader is a departure from God. Of course, this is not so.

Believers must have the right to exercise their own consciences without undue pressure from leaders. Any ministry that does not allow believers the freedom to leave fellowship without private or public recrimination has crossed over into cultic domination. Believers caught in this trap will suffer great pangs of condemnation when they seek to relate to God for themselves and question the actions of an abusive leader. Unfortunately, this false doctrine creates an environment where abusive behavior will become a common fruit. Some will be publicly and privately marked as rebels or *spiritual bastards* when they seek to disengage themselves from abusive situations.

## **Simplicity of Devotion to Christ Missing**

Emotional attachment to a particular leader becomes the reason of blessing from God in this doctrine. The values of patience, faithfulness to God and faith in God's promises are obscured and often lost in this doctrine. These values are reinterpreted to be faithfulness to a particular man. This is not the gospel of Christ but *another gospel*. Consider that Paul warned about being removed from a simple relationship with Christ by another message. His corrective tone is apparent.

*For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully... For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ and no wonder even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 11-12*

This is a different gospel that says that Christ is not enough. It is a gospel that with an unscriptural requirement for righteousness. It is a gospel that leads us away from a simple devotion to Christ to devotion to a ministry father. It is a gospel with a message that says that a believer cannot be complete without a ministry father. After this message is examined and compared with Scripture in detail, it will be clearly revealed as a heresy. This detailed examination and comparison is found in the next chapter.

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## Detailing this Doctrine

### Analyzing this Doctrine

There are three main examples of *ministry fathers and sons* offered as a scriptural basis for this doctrine. They are:

- Moses and Joshua
- Elijah and Elisha
- Paul and Timothy

Some aspects of this doctrine can be found in these examples. For instance, Moses did lay hands on Joshua and Joshua did assume aspects of Moses' ministry at Moses' death. Elisha received a double portion of the spirit of Elijah and called him his *father* at Elijah's ascension. Paul said that Timothy was his *son in the faith* and Timothy seemed to inherit many of the responsibilities of the imprisoned Paul. Paul said that Timothy had received a spiritual gift through the laying on of his hands. Each of these *sons* did seem to serve their *ministry fathers* for a season and grew spiritually through this relationship. This is undeniable and this is certainly a wonderful expression of how God might chose to prepare a man of God for future ministry.

Unfortunately, this doctrine does *not* say that God using a mature man, a *father*, to groom a younger man, a *son* for a future ministry, is *simply one possibility*. This doctrine says that this manner of relationship is the *only legitimate way* God works. This is one of its strongest conclusions and the primary reason that it is a *heresy*. These three main examples, Moses, Elijah and Paul, do not provide adequate biblical support for this extreme argument.

## Ministry Fathers Lack Fathers

If this doctrine were true, then each of these ministry fathers, Moses, Elijah, and Paul should have had their own ministry father to guide their personal ministry development. Scripture must be *stretched* to provide a ministry father for each. For instance, there is little evidence that Moses had a ministry father. The only possible candidate is Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. However, the text does not credit Jethro with fathering Moses. In fact, the Book of Acts tells us that Moses knew of his *call* to deliver Israel before he left Egypt the first time.

*But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand. Acts 7:23-25*

Moses' *call* and forty-year preparation in the wilderness lacks the *essential* human element that this doctrine advocates. While there were important people in Moses' life, God dealt with Moses in a very direct way. God's *call* was the most important element in Moses' ministry that came before his meeting Jethro. He did *not* inherit his ministry from Jethro. He responded to the *call of God* reaffirmed 40 years later by the burning bush experience in the wilderness.

There is absolutely no scriptural evidence that Elijah had a ministry father beyond God Himself either. There is not one line of Scripture that even hints at a ministry father for Elijah. However, this doctrine must somehow build a case for a ministry father for Elijah in order to be true. However, this will not be possible since Scripture is completely silent about Elijah's background beyond calling him the *son of Tish*. If ministry fathers were *essential*, Scripture surely would put some emphasis

on Elijah's ministry father. However, there is none to be found anywhere in Scripture.

Some have worked to find Paul a significant ministry father but the only possible candidates are Barnabus and Gamaliel. The biblical record shows that Barnabus was somewhat influential in Paul's early Christian experience but was certainly no ministry father to Paul. Paul's *call* to ministry came on the road to Damascus. His *call* to ministry came *before* he knew Barnabus.

A few years later, Paul returned with Barnabus to Antioch in Acts Chapter 13. In the intervening time between Paul's conversion and Acts Chapter 13, Barnabus and Paul were not together. There was no possibility of Barnabus' fathering of Paul. By the time of Acts Chapter 13, Paul and Barnabus are on *equal* footing. In fact, it is evident that shortly after that time Paul became the prominent member of this apostolic team. Paul and Barnabus' ongoing relationship is much more *brother to brother* than *father to son*. Additionally, Paul does not credit Barnabus or Gamaliel for imparting his ministry. In fact, Paul writes that men had nothing to do with his call and his apostleship.

*Paul, an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)... Galatians 1:1*

This is very clear. Paul was *not sent by men or through the agency of men*. A ministry father was not *essential*. Jesus Christ called and sent Paul as an apostle. A few verses later Paul tells us that the revelation that he had certainly was not taught or received (or inherited) from another man.

*For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. Galatians 1:11-12*

It is clear that what Paul tells us contradicts this doctrine. Revelation did not come to Paul as a result of a *father to son* relationship. It came directly from the Son of God.

If Paul received revelation by virtue of a relationship with Barnabus or Gamaliel, then Paul was not a good ministry son since he shows little gratitude to either of these men for imparting his ministry. Instead Paul shows a great deal of focus upon his relationship with Christ. It is clear that Paul did not believe that he received his ministry by virtue of a relationship with either Barnabus or Gamaliel but from Christ alone.

### **Ministry Sons Not Fathers Either**

Another weakness in this extreme doctrine is the thought that if a son is properly *fathered* he will become a *ministry father* himself. In these three examples, the three *ministry sons* (Joshua, Elisha, and Timothy) do not become *ministry fathers* in similar fashion. There is *no biblical evidence* that they are the same sort of ministry fathers that their ministry fathers, Moses, Elijah and Paul were.

Joshua has no ministry son at all. At his death at 110 years old, there is no clear inheritor, no successor and no sense in Scripture that there should be. If *father to son* ministry is truly *essential*, as this doctrine teaches, you would think that Scripture would comment on this supposed failure of Joshua. However, Scripture does not speak to this. Scripture does not criticize Joshua. In fact, in the context of Joshua's death, Scripture praises his leadership of Israel:

*And Israel served the LORD while Joshua was alive and while the elders who survived Joshua and who had known all the deeds of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Joshua 24:31*

The same is true of Elisha. He did not have a successor or inheritor either. He had a double portion of the spirit of Elijah but no ministry sons are revealed in Scripture. He had servants but

no one who took the prophetic mantle that he received from Elijah. If the *father to son* order were *essential*, then Elisha would have failed as well. However, Scripture has nothing critical to say of Elisha either. Elisha did not fail in his service to God.

### **A Double Portion But No Sons**

Some of those who teach this doctrine place a great emphasis on the last verses of the last chapter of Malachi. In those verses, Elijah will turn the hearts of the fathers toward the children and the hearts of the children to their fathers.

*Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. Malachi 4:5-6*

These verses do not support this extreme doctrine either. For instance, Elijah had only one ministry son. This is hardly support for a doctrine that says that every Christian should have a ministry father. Much more importantly, Elisha had a *double portion* of the *spirit of Elijah* and had absolute no ministry sons. Clearly, the *spirit of Elijah* is not about having ministry sons. The *double portion of the spirit of Elijah* resulted in twice as many miracles in Elisha's ministry. The *double portion* did not result in a double portion of ministry sons. It is clear that having ministry sons is not *essential* as this doctrine declares.

There is nothing in these verses to suggest that they are speaking about ministry fathers and sons either. These ideas must be imposed upon these verses by this doctrine. The more obvious way to interpret these verses would be to see them as speaking to natural biological fathers and their children.

The spirit of Elijah is about miraculous power bringing repentance and not about ministry sons. The power of the Spirit

revealed in His miraculous works will result in conviction of sin in the lives of people. This will bring them into relationship with the Father through their repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ. As a result, the Holy Spirit will do His sanctifying in their hearts and natural fathers and their children will be restored to each other. Elisha, despite his double portion of the spirit of Elijah, does not provide any support for this doctrine.

### **Timothy as a Ministry Father**

Elisha and Joshua are fairly easy to analyze since the Bible records their whole lives. With Timothy the matter is not quite as simple. It is difficult to say whether or not Timothy became the same kind of father to other men that Paul was to him. Scripture only records a few events of Timothy's early life such as Paul's letters to him and nothing beyond Paul's imprisonment in Rome. However, we do note that Timothy is *not* encouraged specifically to become a father to other men in either of Paul's writings to him. He is encouraged to treat all persons as if they were in a family relationship with him. Timothy is also encouraged to teach other men who will be able to teach others. However, teaching other men does not imply an intimate ministry *father to son* relationship that this doctrine says is *essential*.

### **Paul's Impartation to Timothy**

There are several verses quoted to support the idea that legitimate blessing *only* comes through the *ministry father to son* relationship. For instance, Paul writes to Timothy to remind him of the impartation that he received by the laying on of his hands.

*And for this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.  
2 Timothy 1:6*

These verses at first examination seem to support the contention that a *father to son* connection is *essential* for legitimate transmission of blessing. It does seem that the gift of God came through Paul. However, Paul wrote to Timothy some similar

words in First Timothy that are worth comparing. In that letter, Paul wrote:

*Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed upon you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. 1 Timothy 4:14*

In these verses Paul says that the human element was not him exclusively but the presbytery. Paul does not take credit for the prophetic utterance either here. It is possible that both verses are describing the same event. In any case, these other elders were not Timothy's ministry father and yet Paul gives them credit for bestowing a spiritual gift to Timothy. This contradicts the idea that legitimate blessing *only* flows between ministry fathers and sons. There are other places where this contradiction appears as well. For instance, Paul says

*For I long to see you in order that I may impart some spiritual gift to you, that you may be established... Romans 1:11*

Paul's attitude was very different than that which is being expressed in this doctrine. Paul wanted to bless and help everyone and expected *legitimate blessing* to come to all, not just those who were his ministry sons and were tithing to him. We are reminded that Christ freely ministered to the *uncommitted multitude* as well as to the twelve disciples.

### **Ungodly Attitudes in this Doctrine**

This doctrine states that outside of *father to son* relationships no one is entitled to use teaching, revelation or insights of another man. In this case, the accusation of *thief* has been added to the labeling of other Christians as *spiritual bastards and orphans*. Some who teach this doctrine say that they are offended if someone who is not their ministry son *steals* their revelation.

It is incredible that anyone would claim to *own* the truth. In this case, these leaders are assuming ownership of the revelation of

Scripture. This is an arrogant and misguided pronouncement since revelation actually belongs to God and is never earned or owned by the recipient. Revelation comes to believers by grace directly from God or through human vessels. In any case, the human vessel never owns revelation. Revelation is a gift entrusted to the believer as a stewardship. It is a stewardship that the Word of God encourages us to *freely share* with others.

These misguided leaders should want to *freely share* their so-called revelation to influence others but instead they are concerned at greedily keeping it to themselves. This is because they see revelation as a means to produce money. They believe that paying tithe to the ministry father properly purchases his revelation. Consider Paul's word concerning this motivation.

*For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men but God, who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- 1 Thessalonians 2:3-5*

This doctrine can be a simple *pretext for greed*. Some men want to be paid for revelation that God has entrusted to them. Since this revelation is wrong, we are actually blessed that it has a high cost.

Here is a clear example of the relationship of doctrinal truth to character. Wrong doctrine will always produce wrong character and attitudes in those who embrace it. The truth, however, will set us free. As expected, the gracious giving character of Christ is entirely missing here. There is no sacrificial spirit, no sharing, and no sense of stewardship of the grace of God. There is no thought to Christ's command that says *freely you have received, freely give*. We will review more about this doctrine's relationship to money later in this book.

## **Only One Son Not Several**

This doctrine also fails to note that the three ministry sons each became the *sole successors* of the fathers' ministries. In other words, only *a single son* inherited the ministry of a single father. Conversely, this doctrine allows for a single ministry father to have multiple sons who tithe to him. In each of the primary examples, the fathers have *a single son* who *alone* inherits their ministry. These ministry fathers had no other son but those whom they are grooming to succeed them. For example, Paul tells us that he had *only Timothy* as a ministry son at the end of his ministry. He had *no one else of kindred spirit*.

*But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Philippians 2:19-22*

Was Paul then unsuccessful since he did not have multiple sons? *No!* It simply means that Timothy was prepared by Paul to become the *sole successor* of Paul's ministry. The same is true of the other two main examples of ministry fathers. Elijah had *only* Elisha and Moses had *only* Joshua. The idea of a single ministry father with multiple sons is another distortion of what the Bible teaches.

There is no biblical evidence that any of these inheriting sons paid tithe to their ministry fathers. This doctrine, however, measures ministry success by the number of ministry sons that a ministry father has. A ministry son enters relationship by tithing to the ministry father according to this doctrine. This provides strong financial motives for continuing to teach this extreme doctrine and to pass out books containing it.

### ~3~

## Apostles and Fathers

### Patterns from the Twelve Apostles

We noted in the last chapter that the three main examples of ministry fathers and sons do not support the idea of a single ministry father having multiple sons. In each of the main examples, a single ministry father had a single son who became the *sole successor* of his ministry. Christ having twelve apostles is also used to support the idea of a single father having multiple sons. These apostles are taught as the ministry sons of Jesus Christ in this doctrine. However, examining how the Lord Jesus Christ functioned in ministry brings serious questions to the basic precepts of this doctrine. For instance, Christ's relationships with the Twelve *varied in intimacy*. He apparently had a closer relationship with John, Peter and James than with the other nine apostles. Does this mean that something was wrong with the nine? *Absolutely not*. Christ also had a less intimate relationship with seventy other men. Was there something wrong with these other men? *Absolutely not*. Christ also ministered to the multitudes and was less intimate with them as well. Was there something wrong with the multitudes? *No!* It was simply impossible for Christ to be intimate with everyone and be in a *fathering* relationship with each person. If this doctrine were true, then each group that was less intimate with Christ would have been *increasingly illegitimate* before God. This is not a logical or scriptural premise. It is a heretical idea that produces shame in forgiven believers.

While Christ set an example by discipling a limited number of men, there is *no* direct encouragement by Christ recorded in *Scripture* for *every* ministry to do *exactly* the same thing. In fact, some of Christ's commands to the twelve apostles concern preaching the gospel, healing the sick and casting out demons. Many of those who are proclaiming themselves to be apostles and ministry fathers do little supernatural ministry as Christ

commanded. They seem to focus on one single aspect of the Great Commission and miss the rest of the commands of Christ. Many of them want to *make disciples* of those who are already converted and that are actually the fruit of other ministries. Many seem to think that recruiting equates to evangelism.

### **Legitimacy and Martyrdom**

As a few apostles aged, history records that they developed relationships with younger Christian men. However, these kinds of relationships were not necessarily the norm. A number of the apostles were martyred before intimate relationships could develop. Does this mean that the martyred apostles' ministries were unsuccessful and illegitimate? *Absolutely not!*

The apostle John was the only apostle among the original twelve that died a natural death. All the rest were martyred over a period of time. The writings of the Early Church Fathers reveal that the elderly John was in relationship with a few men that might be considered his ministry sons. Does this mean that John's ministry was more legitimate than those apostles who were martyred early in their ministries before developing these kinds of relationships? *Certainly not!* Obviously God does not measure success in ministry by ministry sons. Otherwise, no one should ever give his or her life for Christ! *No!*

There is strong evidence in the writings of the Early Church Fathers that the Twelve Apostles worked often in teams of two or three. We also see in Scripture the pattern of Christ sending them as teams of two. In the book of Acts, we see Paul teamed with other apostles working together in traveling ministry. These patterns cannot be explained by this doctrine. In fact, the pattern found in the Essential Ministry Father Doctrine has many practical problems that are impossible to resolve. This idea of a single man fathering multiple sons without the aid of other ministries also has the potential to sow division into the Body of Christ.

## Practical Problems to Resolve

Another serious problem exists with the idea of ministry fathers *always* being apostles. This doctrine couples the idea of not being fathered with *spiritual illegitimacy*. In other words, everyone who is not in this kind of relationship is a *spiritual bastard*. If this is so, those who teach this doctrine must resolve some serious practical problems in the initial history of the Church. Consider this situation in the life of the early Church.

*So then, those who had received (Peter's) word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. Acts 2:41-47*

Initially, there were only twelve apostles trained by Christ. They would have been the only possible legitimate *fathering* ministries. In the situation in above passage, we find 3000 people became believers all at once. This would have required each apostle to father 250 people. This would be hardly practical. If each person must be fathered or they are illegitimate, we must ask *why would God cause so many people to receive Christ to be orphaned, illegitimate and spiritual bastards?* Obviously, God does not require each to have a fathering relationship in order to be right with Him. He only requires them to have faith in Christ. In other words, these men are publicly condemning believers to a

state of spiritual illegitimacy even though God, the Father accepts them fully in His beloved Son Jesus.

This passage also reveals that the apostles did not divide the 3000 people into twelve groups to disciple. This doctrine implies that this would be a necessity to make this people *legitimate*. In fact, all the existing apostles ministered to all the people as a team and the people ministered to each other from house to house and in the temple. God put His stamp of approval on this situation by continuing to save people and add them to the 3000.

If the *father to son* ministry pattern is so *essential*, why do we not see it demonstrated in this situation by the apostles? Surely they would have understood this *essential* practice if it were really *essential*. We actually see a very different ministry pattern being demonstrated. What we see here is the apostles working together as a team. There were no particular allegiances among the people of God to particular apostles causing a division in the early Church. This doctrine, however, advocates unhealthy emotional attachments to particular men that will divide the Church.

### **Pressures to Become a Ministry Father**

While there are true apostles set in the Church today, present popular trends in the Church are causing many individuals to identify themselves as apostles when they are not. Some of this has happened as a result of unwise prophetic utterance seeking to promote leaders in front of the public. A misguided and shallow search for significance through recognition is widespread. Many think that recognition by the Church as apostles will give them a sense of significance and destiny. True significance and a sense of destiny can only come from fellowship with the Father. These are internal qualities and can never come by outward achievement or human recognition. These qualities are only found in the transforming revelation of sonship and not through ministry.

Everyone likes to feel important and *essential*. Presently, popular trends and doctrinal "winds" are sending the unhealthy message that *only* the apostle is significant and *essential*. As a result, there are increasing pressures on other ministries, such as prophets and pastors, to publicly promote themselves as apostles. Since a weak theological connection has been made between ministry fathers and apostles, many ministries are now declaring themselves to be ministry fathers as well.

This pressure to be significant and *essential* has even affected a number of prophetesses. Many of these gifted women are already privately declaring themselves to be apostles and publicly may be using such adjectives as "apostolic" as a way of gradually revealing their apostleship. If this unhealthy popular trend continues unabated, there will not be any "Spirit-Filled" ministries, male or female, that will not eventually feel pressure to call themselves as apostles. Since *fathering* has been connected with the ministry of the apostle, many of these ministries will also feel pressure to *father* others when they are not really equipped or called to do so.

The *father to son* doctrine puts additional pressure on these ministries by promoting a related belief that if a ministry father properly fathers a man then he will become a ministry father as well. In other words, this doctrine declares that *proper* spiritual development will *always* produce a ministry father.

There are several large confusing and contradictory "holes" in this theology that says that legitimate ministries be fathered or be fathering others and these fathering ministries are apostolic. Some of the more obvious "holes" are:

*What about gifted women?* This doctrine does not concern itself with women. There is no mention of how a woman might relate to a ministry father or even if she should relate. According to this doctrine, ministries that are not fathered or fathering are *bastard ministries*. Logic would indicate that this means that most if not

all women's ministries are *illegitimate* since they are not being fathered or fathering. *No!*

*What about other gift ministries?* Should evangelists, prophets, prophetesses or teachers be fathered? If so, will they become ministry fathers if they are fathered properly? If they do begin to father other ministries, does this mean that they are apostles? *No!*

*Are all ministry fathers apostles?* Conversely, are all apostles ministry fathers? The New Testament records the apostles preaching the gospel with deliverance from demons, healing and miracles following. Do all so-called ministry fathers presently have the scriptural sign of the apostle? Does he have a regular flow of miracles, signs and wonders? *No!*

*What about ministries that are not apostolic or five-fold?* Are they all illegitimate because they do not father? Is there room for development and growth in ministry in this doctrine? Is there room for ministries that do not preach and teach but have other gifts from God? What about administrators? What about givers? What about Christian businessmen? What about worship leaders and other music ministries? What about ministries serving the poor? What about those who are called by God into "secular" professions such as medical doctors, nurses, lawyers or others? What about scholars who translate the Scriptures into other languages? According to this doctrine all these ministries are illegitimate because they are not fathering others. *No!*

Hopefully, the reader can see that this doctrine cannot be supported by simple logic or by Scripture. It presents a surprising number of illogical positions and unscriptural propositions.

Since this doctrine has these problems, it may not be clear why it is so readily embraced without serious examination. The appeal to leaders may be greater authority over people, their need to be honored and perhaps the financial benefit the doctrine produces. This doctrine's appeal is mainly emotional in followers. This

doctrine manipulates their insecurities and need for intimate relationships. This probably explains the lack of discernment in so many intelligent people. Since this doctrine so strongly appeals to the various needs of leaders and the emotional needs of followers, it is not examined closely when first embraced.

### **Paul's "Not Many Fathers" Passage**

A primary passage that this doctrine on ministry fathers and sons comes from Paul's admonition to the Corinthians. The phrase *not many fathers* comes from the King James version of this passage. Here we quote the New American Standard Version.

*I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 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. I exhort you therefore, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church. 1 Corinthians 4:14-17*

The context of this passage is Paul defending his apostleship to the Corinthian Church. In this context, Paul reminds them that the Corinthian Church owes its existence to his ministry. There are several obvious things and several things less obvious that should be noticed in this passage. First of all, Paul addresses the Corinthians as his *beloved children*. He says that he became their *father through the gospel*. This is fairly obvious. However, what is not so obvious is how Paul is using the terms *children* and *father*. Paul is not using these terms in these verses in the same way that those who teach this doctrine are using them.

The book of Acts tells us of the initial events of the *founding* of the Corinthian Church that involved Paul teaching there for 18 months.

*After these things he (Paul) left Athens and went to Corinth...and he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. Acts 18:1, 11*

Paul is using the term *father* to describe his *founding* of this Church. He obviously did not have a *father to son* relationship with each person of this Church that at this time numbered in the multiple thousands. He was not even directly responsible for the conversion of the majority of the Corinthian Christians. He was responsible for beginning and sustaining the initial evangelism and discipleship process in Corinth that led to the conversion of many there.

What then makes Paul their *father* when others may only be their *instructors*? He was responsible for the conversion of many of the first Christians in Corinth and responsible for their initial instruction in the Christian faith. Paul did not have the same kind of intimate relationship with each Christian in Corinth that he had with Timothy. Paul is obviously using the terms *father* and *son* differently here than when he describes Timothy as his *son* in other passages.

How is Paul using the term *father* in this case? He is using it in the sense of *founder*. He is saying that he is the *founder* of the Corinthian Church. He is using this argument to support his claim to apostolic authority over the Corinthian Church. He is simply saying in so many words "*Church at Corinth, you owe your existence to me*". He is not saying that he has an intimate fathering relationship with each person. When Paul says *not many fathers*, he simply means that he was their *sole founder* as a Church.

Some that use these verses are using them in a different way than Paul was using them. They are trying to establish their apostleship over those that they are not directly or even indirectly responsible for their conversion. They are trying to recruit others by presenting themselves as superior to *instructors or teachers*

by declaring their fatherhood, apostleship and authority. This was not what Paul was doing here. He was responsible for their origin as a Church. That is how Paul was using the phrase *not many fathers*.

Paul's successful founding and establishing of the church in Corinth was the *seal of his apostleship*. By recruiting others, some individuals are seeking to establish their *seal of apostleship* without doing the actual work of apostleship. Some who are using these verses to support their apostleship are seeking to establish their apostleship over those who are not the actual fruit of their ministries. Are they actually causing the Kingdom to expand as Paul did? *No!* They are simply rearranging relationships for their own benefit that already exist in God's Kingdom. They are not producing new fruit for God. They are not establishing new churches or responsible for any new conversions.

### **Lack of Power in the Church**

This doctrine says that any lack of power in the Church is due to violations of *the order of father to son*. Furthermore, all problems in the Church and with God are generally violations of this order according to this doctrine. However, when we look into the New Testament, Christ *always* attributes a lack of power in ministry to a lack of faith in God. For instance, when the Twelve are puzzled by their inability to cast out a demon, they ask Jesus for an explanation.

*Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" And He said to them, "Because of the littleness of your faith; for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you'." Matthew 7:20*

Jesus does not attribute this problem or lack of power to a lack of fathering but to a lack of faith. There are numerous examples but we will offer only two more.

A lack of power in ministry was evidenced in Christ's own ministry as well. In this case, Christ again attributed it to unbelief, in other words a lack of faith in God. He did not attribute it to a problem in His relationship with a ministry father.

*And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was going around the villages teaching. Mark 6:5-6 (CF: Matthew 13:58)*

When the Twelve were afraid in the midst of the storm, Jesus does not attribute their lack of stability and character to bad fathering. He attributes their fear to a lack of faith in God.

*And they came to Him, and awoke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" And He said to them, "Why are you timid, you men of little faith?" Then He arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and it became perfectly calm. Mathew 8:25-26*

Is there a single problem mentioned in Scripture that is directly attributed to a lack of a ministry father-son relationship? *No!*

This heretical doctrine has its priorities reversed. The relationship or lack of relationship between fathers and sons is not generally the problem. Christ reveals in Scripture that a poor relationship with God is the true source of problems. While we cannot neglect human relationships and think that Christ is pleased, we must not confuse which relationship is more important. The true foundation of life is faith in Christ and is not human relationships. True faith in Christ will patiently produce good fruit in human relationships. However, faith in a man, no matter how good, will not always produce fruit in our relationship with God.

## Similarities with Roman Catholicism

### Models of the Church

This doctrine says that there is no other proper relationship model of the Church except the model of *father to son*. However, there are some other very prominent models in Scripture. These other models also teach about the relationships between believers and reveal the relationships between believers and Christ. In fact, the *father to son* model is not at all prominent in comparison with the other models. In fact, it may not actually be a model at all.

The *Bridegroom-Bride* model of the Church is clear in Scripture. Additionally, the *Head and Body of Christ* scriptural model is prominent and has many verses devoted to it. The Church also is revealed as a *family* with God as Father and as a *Kingdom of royal priests* with Christ as Lord and High Priest. Christ as cornerstone and believers as *living stones* being built into a *holy temple* is also revealed in the New Testament. There are a number of other models that are revealed as well. These scriptural models of the Church do not place any emphasis at all on the father-son relationship.

Additionally, the *father to son* model has some severe theological weaknesses. It implies that we can relate to God, the Father through ministry fathers. It seems to see as less unimportant the ongoing redemptive role of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It does not need the blood sacrifice at Calvary since we become legitimate by virtue of a relationship with the Father through a ministry father. Thus, in a practical sense, Jesus Christ is no longer the mediator between God and man and has been replaced by a ministry father.

### **Similar to Roman Catholic Model**

Many have noted the strong similarities between this doctrine and the teaching that has been called "Shepherding" of several decades ago. There are some similarities, particularly the strong emphasis on the role of spiritual authorities in the life of a believer. However, the model presented in the *father to son* doctrine may be closer to the model of the Church presented by Roman Catholic theology. In the Roman Catholic model, an ordained priest (*a father*) must administer the grace of God through sacraments to individual common believers. Without the Roman Catholic *father*, a believer cannot receive mercy and grace from God. The Roman Catholic *father* becomes the mediator between God and each common believer.

Of course, the Protestant Reformation reestablished the biblical truth of *the priesthood of all believers*. All believers have the right and privilege to come to God directly through the mediation of Christ. They do not need a special priest, a *father*, to make them acceptable to God. They may receive grace directly from God or indirectly through the ministry of any other believer. Those who teach the Essential Ministry Fathers Doctrine are unwittingly trying to reform the Reformation. They are trying to return us to a Medieval Roman Catholic understanding of salvation.

### **Generation Transference by Impartation**

There is another strong similarity between this doctrine and Roman Catholicism. There is a strong focus in this doctrine on the idea of *a generational transference of inheritance through impartation*. Generational transference simply means in *the order of father to son*. This means that God's blessing is always transferred from a ministry father to a "circumcised" son. *Impartation* is defined as the conveying of spiritual authority and blessing through the laying on of hands at a particular time in the ministry son's life. The words *blessing*, *inheritance*, *anointing* and *revelation* are often used interchangeably in this doctrine as if they were the same things. The lack of precision in meaning

and adherence to good interpretative methods is common in this doctrine.

This doctrine says that the model of *father to son* is the exclusive way, the *only* legitimate way that God has ever worked in human beings. This doctrine builds an historical *father to son* lineage through the Bible. It attempts to show in biblical history that there was *transference of increasing blessing*, generation after generation, from ministry father to ministry son. This doctrine notes the genealogies in Scripture and attempts to build the idea of a righteous heritage being passed from *father to son*. It does note that there were "breakdowns" in the process at times. It laments that this process must start all over again in some cases. For anyone who knows the history of the people of God, these ideas are impossible to reconcile with the biblical facts. We will explore these facts of Israel's history later in this chapter.

### **Generational Succession of Blessing**

Along with the odd ideas of succession is the idea that this positive heritage or inheritance *grows* with each succeeding generation bringing greater revelation and creating a *deposit*. According to this doctrine, this *deposit* is passed on from ministry *father to son*. This doctrine sees the genealogies in Scripture as proofs of this succession and tries to establish this by examples from Genesis through the Old Testament to the New Testament. Those who teach this doctrine often confuse and ignore the differences between ministry fathers and biological fathers. With similar confusion, this doctrine presents the rather obvious fact that everyone who has lived has had a father as a deep and hidden revelation. Conversely, this doctrine ignores the other obvious fact that everyone has a mother also.

This doctrine also teaches that Christ's revelation, anointing, and ministry was the result of inherited accumulated blessing of the generations before Him. Of course, this is not a presentation of the Jesus Christ of Scripture. This doctrine is presenting *another Jesus*, a false Christ. Jesus Christ's life was not the result of the

generations before Him leaving Him some sort of righteous deposit to inherit. The virgin birth of Jesus Christ must be forgotten in this doctrine for it to be true. Christ was born of a virgin and did not have a biological father or a ministry father to "inherit" from. His life was the result of His incarnation, His anointing by the Holy Spirit and the call and the will of His Father being lived out upon the Earth.

According to the succession idea, increasing blessing, *layers of blessing, a deposit*, continue until now. Coupled with this heretical idea is the fear-producing idea that unless one is in proper relationship with this generational flow of blessing that he or she cannot receive this *deposit* legitimately, properly or at all from God. As you would expect, proper relationship with the generational flow of blessing is loosely defined as obedience to and emotional attachment to a *ministry father*. These fears have no basis in Scripture and are not logical.

### **Paul's Attitude About His Heritage**

Paul also describes his previous generational heritage in another passage. While he had much to carnally boast about in Jewish heritage, he said this about it:

*Although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ...  
Philippians 3:4-8*

Paul is certainly not writing here that his previous heritage somehow brought him to Christ by giving him an inherited blessing. In fact, Paul is revealing that he has counted his heritage as *loss* and as *rubbish* for the sake of Christ. In fact, if Paul had believed the *father to son* doctrine, he should have credited Gamaliel as his ministry father in this passage. He would have been more positive in this passage about his generational *layers of blessing* leading him to Christ. However, Paul is describing his generational heritage in strong negative terms in comparison with his relationship with Christ.

### **Paul's Correction of Focus on Men**

According to this doctrine, each man of God should have his own ministry father. This doctrine teaches that we should honor a man as our ministry father and as the source of our blessing. However, Paul puts this in right perspective.

*For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men? What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:4-7*

There are several points that this passage indicates. First of all, Paul corrects the carnal tendency to exalt gifted men. Excessive allegiance to men has always been a problem of the flesh. It is clear that it always produces disunity in the Church. Paul indicates in the passage above that no Christian should identify with a Christian leader to the point that he cannot receive ministry from Christ's other servants. Even though Paul was the apostle who established Corinth, he acknowledged that Apollos, another apostle, had watered them. In other words, Apollos had a *legitimate ministry* among the Corinthian Church even though he was not their *father*. Paul corrects the carnal focus on human

leaders back to a focus upon God who is the actual cause of spiritual growth.

### **Weaknesses in Succession Scheme**

Faith in Christ has little to do with blessing in this particular theological scheme. In this doctrine, it seems that a relationship with a ministry father is much more important than relationship with Christ. In fact, you really cannot have a suitable relationship with Christ without a ministry father, according to this doctrine.

This succession idea ignores or minimizes what the Bible says about the *call of God*. Many of the men of God in Scripture are called and used by God without benefit of an active ministry father. Of course, if any anointed men without ministry fathers can be found, the *father to son* doctrine has been proven to be wrong. Actually, there are many more examples of these "*unfathered*" anointed ones than examples of men who had any relationship that might resemble a ministry father. There are many such problems in this historical succession scheme. We will analyze many of them later in Chapter 6.

The succession idea also logically demands that the ministry father must also be in the generational flow by relationship with his own ministry father at some time in the past. In other words, ideally there must be an unbroken connection of ministry fathers to sons all the way back to Genesis. This makes the succession idea very similar to the idea of *apostolic succession* that the Roman Catholic Church teaches.

In Roman Catholic theological thought, the present day Pope's legitimacy is established because he is supposedly the successor of previous Popes all the way back to the apostle Peter. In other words, the Pope's legitimacy comes by succession and not by the *call of God*. Of course, we reject the above ideas as being unscriptural and lacking actual historical basis. We also again note the strong similarities between this doctrine and Roman

Catholic theology. The *father to son* doctrine establishes legitimacy in a strongly similar way.

### **No Evidence of Increasing Blessing**

If this succession idea were correct, you would think that there would be evidence of it in Scripture. However, Scripture reads a very different way. For instance, Stephen gives an inspired and concise review of the history of Israel to the Sanhedrin just before they murder him.

*And he (Stephen) said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran... Acts 7:2*

We note that Stephen refers to *fathers* in the above verse. He is obviously using the term to describe the older male leaders among the Sanhedrin who are about to murder him. He also uses *our father* to describe Abraham. In this case, Stephen is using *father* as it is often found in Scripture to describe the patriarchs of Israel's history. A few verses later, the term *fathers* is used again in the sense of patriarchs again. However, this usage is more general than many of the others. It applies to more than just the important men of Israel's history.

*"This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you. And our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt..." Acts 7:38-39*

Here we come to the heart of our discussion. If the doctrine of increasing blessing being passed to each generation by the previous generation were true, you would think that Scripture would not have statements like the above in it. In this case, this verse describes the *fathers* who were *unwilling to be obedient and repudiated God and turned back to Egypt*. Should this not be

convincing, Stephen continues his review of the fathers in Israel's history.

*"You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it." Acts 7:51-53*

It is clear that this doctrine is very wrong. There is no succession. There is no increasing blessing being passed down. Israel *mistreated the called of God* among them all through their history right up to the coming of Christ. These fathers did not change their behavior because of some large deposit of increasing righteousness. They continued their sinful rejection of the righteous people among them. Should the words of the martyr Stephen be doubted, then consider the words of the Lord Jesus Christ about Israel's history.

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been living in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partners with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.' Consequently you bear witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers." Matthew 23:29-32*

The scribes and Pharisees thought that they had a "righteous inheritance" from their fathers. They were looking to their heritage and relationships with human beings as a source of righteousness. Instead, the Lord Jesus tells them the truth. They have nothing righteous to inherit. In fact, they are duplicating the sins of their fathers in persecuting the called men of God in their

history. Placing faith in a falsely righteous heritage being passed down is also a problem of the *father to son* doctrine. Again, if there is any doubt to whether Christ believed that the fathers of Israel were passing down a righteous deposit, consider His words again.

*Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. Luke 6:22-23*

This hardly supports the idea that the *fathers* of Israel were somehow the source of blessing. Instead Christ tells us once again that they were the problem! In fact, the ideas of succession of blessing are not only more similar to Roman Catholicism but they are also strongly similar to those wrong beliefs and practices of the Pharisees who were the main opposition to Jesus Christ.

## Medieval Methods of Interpretation

### Overuse of Types in this Doctrine

This doctrine also uses questionable interpretative methodology in addressing Scripture. It relies strongly upon Old Testament types, which are easily twisted into support for practically any doctrine, true or false. A type is generally an Old Testament person or object that is understood to be symbolic of a New Testament truth or person. There are some proper uses of types such as those that are already explained and revealed in the New Testament. However, this doctrine creates new meanings for types and uses them in ways that the New Testament does not. Sometimes this doctrine presents *actual* New Testament historical events as types and finds some less than obvious spiritual "truth". Types are so flexible that they have been historically used to teach error. This is one of the reasons that the Protestant Reformers reacted so strongly against them. Passages can be so strangely spiritualized to end up teaching something very different from the intended meaning of their author.

By spiritualizing *actual* historical events this doctrine finds illegitimate support for itself. This is also alarmingly like Dark Ages Roman Catholic doctrine. The over-spiritualizing of passages that should be read literally was the basis of many false doctrines and superstitious practices in the medieval pre-reformation Roman Catholic Church. Origen and other church fathers were guilty of the overuse of types and of over-spiritualizing passages. Martin Luther and the other reformers reacted strongly to the improper interpretative methods that contradicted the straightforward teaching of the New Testament.

This doctrine also frequently uses verses that are addressing God, the Father and the Son, Jesus Christ or biological fathers and

sons to teach about *ministry fathers and sons*. This doctrine frequently *mixes* verses in this imprecise way ignoring principles of interpretation. For example, some that teach this doctrine might use Matthew 3:17. In this verse God, the Father is speaking to His son Jesus the words "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*". Those that teach this doctrine might find "hidden" in these verses the teaching that human ministry fathers speak, declare and legitimize the sonship of other men. Those that teach this doctrine might note that the Father sent the Son Jesus into the world and say that a ministry father must send a son into ministry. Many odd doctrines that cannot be supported from a direct reading and interpretation of Scripture come from interpretative methods such as this. Scripture can be twisted to say anything that they wish by overusing *types* and *mixing* techniques.

### **Another Improper Interpretive Technique**

We promised the reader that we would say more about the tithe in this book. In the next few pages, we will attempt to "kill two birds with one stone". We will continue to discuss improper interpretive methods and also discuss how those teaching this doctrine teach about the tithe. For example, this doctrine wants to establish that ministry sons should pay tithe to ministry fathers. It uses another improper method that could be called *substitution*. This is how *substitution* works. First of all, this doctrine presents the verse that says that we should honor elders found in Paul's writings.

*Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 1 Timothy 5:17-18*

This doctrine then tells us that *elders* in this verse should be considered the same as *ministry fathers*. Secondly, it says that *honor* means that we should *pay tithe*. In other words, what this

doctrine says that this verse means is *sons pay tithe to a ministry father*. This appears on the surface to be a reasonable interpretation since the context does reveal that Paul is speaking about supporting financially those who are doing ministry. However, the verse does not say anything about *father to son*. It does not say anything about the tithe. It does not say that the tithe should be paid in a direct fashion to one particular *elder* as your personal *ministry father*. The statement here is much more general. It is simply saying that *elders who labor hard in preaching and teaching should be financially supported so that they can continue their ministries*.

In the previous example, we remind the reader that *honor* became *pay tithe* in meaning. In other words, the words *pay tithe* were *substituted* for the word *honor*. Using this improper technique, the doctrine then *substitutes* this meaning into other verses that have nothing to do with financial support for ministry. In other words, wherever the word *honor* is found in other verses it becomes *pay tithe to a ministry father* in meaning no matter what the context of the verse. For example, this *substitution* and a *mixing* might occur in a verse like the following:

*In order that all may honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. John 5:23*

This doctrine might use the *substitution* and *mixing* techniques to read into this verse a very odd meaning. It might *substitute pay tithe* for the word *honor* in this verse and then use the *mixing* technique to read *ministry fathers and ministry sons* out of *Father* and *Son*. Then it could teach that this verse means that *ministry sons should pay tithe to ministry fathers*. Of course, this verse read in its context means nothing like that at all.

### **Considering the Tithe**

While *paying tithe* is an important doctrine of the Bible, this is a twisting of the tithing teaching for an intended effect. In simple

terms, the tithe was used to support the local ministry of the Levites in Israel's history. It was to be brought to the storehouse in every locality to provide support for the families of the Levites in order that the men in these families might devote themselves to the ministry of teaching the Law of God to the families in the locality where they lived.

The Levites were to provide instruction for the children of all the twelve tribes in the Word of God. Where the tithe was not paid in support, the Levites left their calling and became occupied in other endeavors to support their families. In turn, the children were not taught the Law of God and the ignorant succeeding generation departed from God's plan and purpose into sin and corruption.

The *father to son* doctrine has the potential for removing the tithe from the local church where the children are being instructed and improperly giving it to men who are not local ministry to those families. Any doctrine that removes the tithe from the local storehouse is suspect. Anyone who takes the tithe from recruited individuals in a local church is stealing from the local "Levites" and weakening the ministry of that particular local church. Pastors ought to resist any so-called apostle or father who seeks to recruit people in his congregation to pay him tithe. If the pastor wishes to support the apostle as his own pastor, it should be his option.

Often the justification for taking the tithe from individuals in the local church is that the Levites and Priests tithed to the High Priest. In this case, the High Priest is used as a type of the apostle or the ministry that is to receive the tithe. This would mean that an apostolic ministry would be due no more than a tithe of income of the local "Levites" who recognized them as apostolic authorities over their churches. However, there is absolutely nothing in the writings of Paul or any of the other apostles to suggest that they supported themselves by any other means than free-will offerings or an occasional ordinary job.

These apostolic men were not wrong in supporting themselves with physical labor if necessary for the sake of a clean conscience and a good testimony.

Every functional apostle ought to be a member of a local church. Perhaps the answer for the apostle's support is as simple as the local church seeing their need to support his ministry from the tithe that is collected to a local church. If he is the senior member of the five-fold ministry in a particular location this is easy to accomplish. It is more problematic when the apostle is younger and not the senior ministry person in a local church and his ministry takes him outside the particular local church. A truly functional apostle deserves support from the works that he establishes and help from the Church that sends him. He does not deserve support produced by recruiting.

### **Ministry Fathers Circumcise Sons**

This doctrine strongly promotes the idea that no *proper spiritual development* can occur without the presence of a human *ministry father* actively and consciously guiding it. This is described by misused typology as *a ministry father circumcising his son*. This idea is drawn from several passages in the Old Testament where a biological father circumcised his maturing son and Paul's circumcision of Timothy. These are *actual* historical events that are being used as types to teach something that is actually unrelated to the passages. In Paul's case, circumcision of Timothy was simply a practical measure to allow Timothy greater acceptance by Jews. It allowed Timothy to accompany Paul into Jewish homes and synagogues. To use this *actual* event as a type of a ministry father disciplining or training a ministry son is a misuse of types. Paul was not disciplining or training Timothy when he circumcised him.

The few Old Testament examples of a biological father circumcising their maturing sons produce misleading types. Again, this is an indiscriminate use of biological fathers to represent ministry fathers. Also, circumcision of adult men was

extremely unusual did not continue into Israel's history and should not be used as if it were the normal way. Generally speaking circumcision was for male infants and not maturing sons. After the Law was given, the Old Testament priesthood had the responsibility of circumcision of male infants and not the biological father.

Those who relate this doctrine are *ignoring* how the New Testament uses circumcision. Circumcision is actually used as a type in the New Testament. New Testament typology relates circumcision to *water baptism* rather than to discipline and training of believers. Further, the New Testament uses this term in a context that contradicts this false doctrine. Paul says in Colossians:

*See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. Colossians 2:8-12*

The following points in this passage relate to the *father to son* doctrine:

- Paul warns believers not to be *taken captive* by ideas or doctrine that says that you are not *made complete in Christ*. This is precisely what the *father to son* doctrine is teaching. This doctrine says that a ministry father is *essential* to be legitimate.

- Paul tells us that *in Him (Christ)* we have already been *circumcised*. This doctrine says that a ministry father must accomplish this.
- Paul tells us that this *circumcision* is *made without hands*, which simply means that human beings are not involved. This circumcision is a divine action without the aid of any human being, ministry father or otherwise.
- Paul writes that the *circumcision of Christ has already accomplished the removal of the body of the flesh*. In other words, no ministry father is needed to accomplish this circumcision.
- Paul tells us that this has all been accomplished through *faith in the working of God*. Faith in a ministry father is not *essential*.

It is ironic that the Apostle Paul actually teaches *against* the *father to son* doctrine as he uses the type of circumcision in this Colossians passage.

### **Normal Ideas of Discipleship**

The writings behind this doctrine indicate that a harsh *circumcision or cutting* must given by the ministry father for the son to become what God wishes. This *cutting* idea seems to go beyond normal scriptural ideas of discipline, encouragement, reproof, and rebuke. It has the appearance of creation of a situation where abusive treatment of the so-called son could be considered a normal process of development. There are no guidelines or limits as to what is acceptable treatment and what would be considered abuse.

Another area where there are no limitations or guidelines is how long a ministry son must serve a father before he is released into ministry. Christ taught and disciplined the Twelve for less than three years before he released them into ministry. On the other

hand, the *father to son* doctrine implies that *a long period of service* is necessary to inherit a ministry. A release of a son may never actually occur in the ministry father's mind. In fact, in some situations the only release will be when the ministry son awakens to an abusive situation.

Many of the men who embrace this doctrine may treat their ministry sons in a kind and gentle fashion. However, without teaching the proper limits to both *fathers* and *sons*, there will be those who embrace this false doctrine and appoint themselves with the authority to abuse other Christians. The Church today is full of many examples of this kind of spiritual abuse.

There is a fearful pronouncement in these writings that if a son withdraws from *circumcision* by a father, then he will not become what God wishes and will become a *spiritual bastard*. We have noted already that this is a misuse of the term *bastard*. Creating these kinds of fears and shame in believers is abusive and controlling. It lacks scriptural basis and the humble and kind spirit of Jesus Christ. This kind of false doctrine will authorize some leaders to abuse others. Fears of failing God will create willing victims of this abuse. It will also create some that will see themselves as *fathers* and will not be correctable by anyone, particularly someone younger.

### **The Need for Other Ministries**

A lack of exposure to other ministries could be a problem of those who are propagating this doctrine. Since they advocate a single *father to son* relationship, it is possible that they are not getting enough *cross-pollination* to produce healthy spiritual growth and correct doctrine. Strong exposure to all forms of five-fold ministry is essential to proper spiritual growth. Excessive dependence upon a single man, no matter how gifted, will surely cause stunted growth.

As in nature, a plant must be in soil that has a variety of nutrients in order to obtain its full stature, so a believer must also have a

varied experience with many gifts and ministries in order to grow properly. If the plant lacks a single nutrient, it will be stunted, so a believer needs relationships with various pastors, teachers, prophets, evangelists, and apostles in their proper seasons. Conversely, if any particular nutrient is excessive in the soil, it will actually poison the plant. Excessive dependence upon a single man, no matter how good, will stunt spiritual growth. Balance in all things is an essential to spiritual growth.

# Bible Heroes Without Ministry Fathers

## Limitations of the Chapter

While it is not possible to list every individual, it is possible to look at this doctrine in the light of what Scripture reveals for the most important individuals in Scripture. Readers should remember that the *father to son* doctrine says that a ministry father is *essential* to legitimacy. Every righteous man in Scripture that does have a ministry father proves that this doctrine is extreme.

We note from the outset that there is difficulty in sorting out the natural fathers from ministry fathers. The doctrine that we are examining draws no distinctions between these different kinds of relationships and uses the *mixing* technique that we addressed earlier to teach about ministry fathers and sons from natural fathers and sons. We state again that this is not a proper way to interpret Scripture. What we will observe is whether or not the natural father fills the description or function of a ministry father in the specific cases. Each righteous man that did not have a relationship with someone who fits the function of a ministry father will again show that this doctrine is wrong about this being an *essential* ingredient to successful service to God.

We have already reviewed in detail the six individuals that were the primary examples of this doctrine. They were Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Elisha, Paul and Timothy. We found during our examination that they do not support the claims of the *father to son* doctrine. Additional comments will be made for a few of them where appropriate. We start with the first man that God made a covenant with in Scripture, the righteous man Noah.

**Noah.** There is no mention of an influential ministry father in Noah's life. His biological father was Lamech who was the son of Methuselah who was the son of Enoch. Enoch is the only person described as righteous in Noah's line as far back as Adam. There is no evidence that any of these men impacted Noah personally for righteousness sake although it is possible. The Bible simply says:

*And the LORD said, I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD. These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God. And Noah became the father of three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Genesis 6:7-10*

The Bible does not credit Noah's righteousness to his father. In fact, his father is only mentioned in the genealogical record earlier in the Chapter. His relationship with God and *call* to save his family from the coming flood were simply a result of his being righteous and finding favor with God. They were not a result of transmission of blessing from generation to generation.

As we follow the rest of the story, Noah's three sons and their descendents do not have the same favor with God. If this generational transmission doctrine were true, we should see increasing blessing in Noah's sons. That blessing does not seem to be there. The only thing in Noah's life that has impact on his descendents is that God covenants never to destroy the entire earth again by a flood. We must also note that there was also a degeneration of humanity from the time of Adam to Noah and not an increase of righteousness. According to the text, the earth was full of violence. In fact, Noah was the only man described as righteous in his time.

**Job.** The text about him says nothing about his biological father or the influence of any other man. Job, however, does have concerns about his own children's righteousness and offers sacrifice to God for them. Scripture does not indicate that any of Job's children were considered righteous or inherited anything of a spiritual deposit either. There is nothing to point us to this doctrine in the life of Job.

**Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.** Abraham, like Noah, is a key figure in the plan of God. Much like Noah, Abraham's father is not called a righteous man by the text. In fact, the generations between Noah and Abraham do not seem to have a single righteous man worth commenting on by Genesis. Without any revealed explanation, the LORD selects Abraham and begins to speak to him. The Bible refers to this unexplained selection as the *call of God*. This phenomenon is found in many biblical men's experience and is ignored by the *father to son* doctrine. God calls these men to Himself. While in a very few cases, it seems connected to a call to their birth fathers; most often it is not connected at all.

In Abraham's case there is no transmission of blessing to him from a father other than God. Faith is the key element in his relationship with God and not an inheritance from his father. However, it is apparent that the covenant that God makes with him is passed down through his family line. However, God must initiate and renew it personally with each of Abraham's descendents. Not all Abraham's descendents are called by God to receive the covenant. Isaac is called but Ishmael is not called. Jacob is called but Esau is not called. While the covenant is being passed through the family line, there is little evidence that these men are more righteous than those who went before them or those whom God did not call. In Jacob's case, he is quite a rascal even for a period after God renews the Abrahamic covenant with him.

The twelve sons of Jacob also are poor examples of an increased blessing with the possible exception of Joseph. However, Joseph poses a problem to this doctrine of generational transmission from fathers as well. We remind the reader that there need not be but a few exceptions to prove that this doctrine is not true. As we review Scripture, we find that men of God with a significant ministry father are the exception rather than the rule. Most men of God have *unique development* with God using various means and a variety of godly people to prepare them for ministry. Joseph is a good example of *unique development*.

**Joseph.** Joseph's dreams in his childhood reveal the call and plan of God for his future. There is nothing in the youthful Joseph's actions, such as service to his father that produces these dreams. The text says that Joseph had the favor of God and his father, Jacob. However in Joseph's youth, the influence of his father Jacob is *removed* when his jealous brothers sell Joseph into slavery.

Joseph is *removed* from all godly human influence in order to fulfill the *call of God* for his life. He grows up physically, morally, and spiritually in the pagan nation of Egypt with no contact with worshippers of the God of the Israelites. When God makes Joseph Prime Minister of Egypt, only then does he reunite with his father, Jacob.

There is nothing in the story of Joseph to offer some evidence of the transmission of blessing. There is nothing to support the idea that a father's influence is *essential* for the proper upbringing of a son. If Joseph had remained under Jacob's influence, he could not have fulfilled the purposes of God for his life. The key element in Joseph's story is his *call* by God through the dreams he had in his youth. Joseph stands as a strong contradiction of the *father to son* doctrine.

**The Other Eleven Sons of Jacob.** These sons stayed with Jacob and yet the son that does not live with Jacob is the outstandingly

righteous man among them. This does strongly contradict the *fathers to son* doctrine. These other eleven sons are not strongly righteous men. In fact, several of them commit serious sins and receive much less than a blessing from Jacob on his deathbed.

**Moses.** Moses in similar fashion to Joseph is *removed* from his father's influence early in his life. The life of Moses also contains many contradictions to the *father to son* doctrine. For instance, Moses is *removed* from his Jewish father by being placed in the reed ark and then being brought into Pharaoh's household. Moses' mother, employed by Pharaoh's daughter, becomes his nurse. Pharaoh's daughter is unaware that the nurse that she has hired is actually Moses' mother. In this case, Moses' father has little influence in his life. The amount of influence that his mother has is not clear but is not very important to this false doctrine. After Moses murders the Egyptian and flees to Midian, he meets other worshippers of God. In this setting in Midian, Moses marries and interacts with the priest of Midian, his father-in-law, Jethro. However, there is nothing in the text to indicate that Jethro was the key element in Moses' ministry. In fact, the text reads:

*So God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And God saw the sons of Israel, and God took notice of them. Now Moses was pasturing the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian; and he led the flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. Exodus 2:24-3:2*

Even a quick analysis of this text indicates that the reasons that Moses was called by God to deliver the Children of Israel from the Egyptians were these:

- *God heard their groaning.* In His compassion, God was answering their prayers.

- *God remembered His covenant.* God's covenant with Abraham included a promise of deliverance after the fourth generation was born in Egypt. (Genesis 15:13-16) Moses was used by God to fulfill that promise to Abraham.

Moses did not qualify for ministry by having a so-called proper relationship with a ministry father. He qualified by virtue of the *call of God*. Scripture does not indicate that Jethro influenced the forty-year preparation of Moses that occurred in Midian. If this doctrine were true, the Word of God would tell us of Jethro's influence. However, Moses did not enter his ministry because of his relationship with Jethro. Moses entered his ministry after he had received the *call of God* from the burning bush. Once again, the *call of God* is the key element and not some sort of transmitted inheritance.

Further, Moses only has one ministry son, Joshua. While some would add Caleb, there is nothing in the text to validate that Caleb had a special relationship with Moses. In fact, Moses has relationship with many other people including seventy elders but Joshua is his only so-called ministry son. Does this mean that there was something wrong with the seventy? No! Joshua was simply being prepared to take over leadership of Israel when Moses died. Further, Moses' two biological sons do not inherit his ministry call either. Was there something wrong with them? No! The *father to son* doctrine is wrong about what inheritance is and how it is passed.

**Joshua.** Joshua is one of the main examples used in this doctrine. We explored the weaknesses of Joshua as an example in detail in Chapter 2 and will not elaborate here.

**Aaron, the High Priest.** Aaron, the older brother of Moses is called by God to be High Priest. There is no ministry father for him either. There certainly is no long-term preparation. His relationship with Moses after Moses returns from Midian is too

short-term to substantiate that he inherited his ministry from Moses. His sons, however, are often presented as support for the doctrine of inherited ministry. The most obvious problem is that the sons of Aaron are *all* called to the priesthood at the *same time* that Aaron is called. There is nothing inherited. The males of the entire family of Aaron are called by God to serve as priests from the call onward. The male descendants of Aaron become priests on the basis of this one-time call and not by virtue of a special relationship, character traits or preparation by their fathers. In fact, there were large numbers of priests who were ignorant and wicked in biblical history right down to the time of Christ. Priesthood was not a righteous deposit being passed down from fathers to sons.

**The Judges.** Each of the Judges are called as God responds to the prayers of Israel. There is no evidence of inheritance being the primary factor. In fact, the only three Judges that we have significant information about their backgrounds also contradict the *father to son* doctrine. These three Judges are Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel.

**Jephthah.** Since this doctrine calls God's children *bastards* and *illegitimate*, we have included the Judge Jephthah. Jephthah was actually a bastard, using the word properly. He was the illegitimate child produced by a relationship between his father and a harlot. Jephthah is a good example of how these terms are being misused.

Jephthah lived with his father and his half-brothers in his youth. His grown brothers later denied him inheritance and forced him out of the household because he had a different mother. This may imply that Gilead, the father, had died at some point before these events. However, it is clear from the biblical text that Jephthah had an ongoing relationship with his father despite being a bastard. Clearly, Jephthah being a bastard was not his fault. It was actually the fault of his father and his harlot mother.

Once again, Jephthah illustrates that this doctrine has misused the terms *bastard* and *illegitimate*. A bastard or illegitimate child is someone who is born of an unmarried union. A bastard is not someone who does not have relationship with a father. The fault is entirely with the parents. The *father to son* doctrine however, normally misplaces the blame with the illegitimate child. Jephthah also illustrates that God's call is likely to have *nothing* to do with biological lineage, whether righteous or wicked.

**Samson.** Another Judge that we have significant information about is Samson. Samson, like so many others, is a problem to the *father to son* doctrine. Samson's mother prayed because she was barren and the angel of the LORD gave her a unique child in response. In fact, the angel appeared twice to Samson's mother before appearing to Samson's father. The key elements are Samson's mother's prayer and the *call of God*. Samson's great strength came as a result of the *call of God* that came *before* his mother conceived. Consider what the angel said to her on his first visit.

*Then the angel of the LORD appeared to the woman, and said to her, "Behold now, you are barren and have borne no children, but you shall conceive and give birth to a son. Now therefore, be careful not to drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing. For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." Judges 13:1-5*

- Samson's call came before he was born. It certainly was not inherited from his father.
- Samson's ministry is predicted before his birth and was not dependent upon a ministry father.

- This prophetic prediction is conditioned only on his maintaining a Nazirite commitment and not conditioned upon a relationship with a ministry father.
- Samson's mother, not his father, is the key figure in these events.

It is apparent that in Samson's later life, he could have benefited from the influences of a godly man. However, this in no way invalidates his very real call and purpose. Samson's life, tragic as it may seem, did fulfill many of the purposes of God. He did deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines.

**Samuel.** Samuel is *removed* from his father and mother to be trained by the priest Eli. Eli is not the primary element but again the *call of God* that comes to the child Samuel while sleeping. The *call of God* comes in response to the prayers of the mother of Samuel rather than the righteousness of Eli or Samuel's father. In fact, Eli comes under God's judgement for his failure as a father! Eli's sons are exceedingly wicked priests and are eventually killed by God in judgement on their sexual sins.

Scripture never criticizes Samuel and yet Samuel is unable to "transmit" his righteousness to his own physical sons and he has no ministry sons either. None of them succeed him in ministry. Furthermore, Samuel does not groom either one of the kings that he anoints. With both Saul and David, Samuel has brief but important encounters with them where he brings the prophetic word of God and then leaves them in the hands of God. This hardly seems like fathering either. Again, there are many more examples of righteous men who were not fathered in the manner that this doctrine declares is *essential*.

**David.** It is apparent that *call of God* is more significant in Scripture than having a ministry father. David is also a strong example of this. David is called by God to be King of Israel as shepherd boy. God calls the youthful David before he has a

chance to serve a ministry father. He does not inherit this from his father.

The prophet Samuel is sent by God to the house of Jesse to anoint a new King over Israel. Samuel thinks that one of the mature sons of Jesse is suitable on the basis of his appearance but God corrects Samuel.

*But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7*

God sees what men do not see and calls on that basis. God does not call on the basis of an emotional attachment or loyalty to a particular man. God rejects each man presented to the prophet Samuel until the youngest son is brought before him. The youngest son has nothing to offer in the natural. David is still a child. Yet God sees what man cannot see and calls David as King.

*Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. And Samuel arose and went to Ramah. 1 Samuel 16:13*

This again has nothing to do with David's father or even his subsequent relationship with Saul, Samuel or any other man of God.

**Daniel.** Again, the heroes of Scripture, become problems to this doctrine. Daniel in his youth is carried away to Babylon. He is *removed* from all influence of his biological father. There is no mention of any ministry father either. While his primary human influence and surroundings may have been pagan, yet Daniel hears the *call of God* and fulfills his calling as a prophet without the benefit of a ministry father.

**Isaiah.** There is no mention of Isaiah's grooming by another man as a prophet. Isaiah's father, Amoz, is not mentioned anywhere in Scripture except by connection to his son the prophet. The father's name only appears as *Isaiah, son of Amoz*. There were no surnames at this period of history. People were simply identified by their father's name or their city of residence or origin in some cases. Isaiah's call or usefulness to God was not a result of inheritance from his father.

**Jeremiah.** Jeremiah is problematic for this doctrine that says that serving a ministry father results in receiving his ministry. The most obvious thing about Jeremiah is his prophetic call before his birth that God revealed to him in his youth. His call is not dependent upon his father's righteousness or his influence.

*Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, And before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations." Jeremiah 1:4-5*

God does not mention Isaiah's biological father, Hilkiyah, who was a priest and might have been High Priest for a period. We are uncertain about the details of his father Hilkiyah's life since Scripture records this common Hebrew name in many places for several men during this period of time. We can speculate that Isaiah's father may have been a positive influence in his life although Scripture does not indicate it. However, once again the *call of God* before Jeremiah's birth is the significant element rather than an inheritance from his father.

**The Minor Prophets.** Ministry fathers are not found in the Minor Prophets. There does not appear to be anything substantial to support this doctrine in the lives of Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, or Zechariah. However Amos and Malachi need to be considered.

**Amos.** This prophet's background also lacks the elements of a ministry father. Consider these verses:

*Then Amos answered and said to Amaziah, "I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet; for I am a herdsman and a grower of sycamore figs. But the LORD took me from following the flock and the LORD said to me, 'Go prophesy to My people Israel.'" Amos 7:14-15*

Amos emphasizes his *lack* of heritage for the task that God called him to. The *call of God* to prophesy to Israel is the most important element here also.

**Malachi and John the Baptist.** There is nothing in the life of the prophet Malachi to validate this doctrine either. However, as we have already noted, Malachi is often quoted by this doctrine for its last verses. These are also the last verses of the Old Testament. They are:

*Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. And he will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. Malachi 4:5-6*

These seem like important verses worth considering. They are quoted in part in several places in the New Testament. In each case, they are unrelated to the *father to son* doctrine. They relate to the birth and ministry of John the Baptist.

*But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John... And he will turn back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And it is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN... Luke 1:13-17 (edited for brevity)*

This passage says that John the Baptist's ministry would turn the hearts of biological fathers back to their children. This is speaking about biological fathers and children being reconciled rather than ministry fathers and sons. There is no hint of the ministry *fathers and sons* doctrine in this passage.

There are two passages to consider in the Gospel of Matthew that are related to the passage in Malachi as well. They are Matthew 11:13-14 and Matthew 17:10-13. There is nothing in either of these passages that supports the *father to son* doctrine. If anything, both passages support the thought that repentance, which was the focus of John's ministry, will cause a biological father to turn his heart toward his children. Further, we note also that John the Baptist does not have a ministry father either.

**The Lord Jesus Christ.** As many others, the Lord Jesus does not have a significant ministry father. Joseph is not mentioned after Jesus is twelve years old. In that context, it is clear that the twelve-year old Jesus knows more about His mission than either Mary or Joseph. Jesus knows about *His Father's business*. By the time Jesus is an adult; there is absolutely no mention of Joseph other than identifying Jesus as *the carpenter's son*.

If having a ministry father was as *essential* as this doctrine teaches, why doesn't Jesus demonstrate it in His own life? Christ does undergo baptism by John the Baptist as an example for us. Why doesn't Christ set an example of submission to a ministry father? The answer is that a ministry father is *not* an *essential* ingredient to being a righteous person. Baptism, on the other hand, must be *essential*, since the Lord commands it several times and demonstrates it Himself.

We did not find substantial evidence of this doctrine in the lives of significant New Testament individuals such as the Apostle Paul, the Twelve apostles, Timothy or any one else. The reason is that this doctrine is not what the New Testament teaches. It is no

wonder that Christ forbids the very thing that this doctrine advocates.

*And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Matthew 23:9*

Surely the reader can see the wisdom of Christ's words. The actual biblical model is very different than the *father to son* doctrine. Most biblical heroes did not have anything that resembles a ministry father. In fact, a positive truth emerges from this study:

*Every called man and woman in Scripture was prepared in unique ways to fulfill their ministry. God used circumstances and other people in varying ways in each case. The only common element for all of them was faith in a God who would not fail them.*

This positive truth of *unique spiritual development* is also true for us today. Most men and women of God will have a number of relationships and circumstances that will prepare them for fulfilling the will of God in their lives.

There is an important need for mature men, apostles and others, to minister their wisdom to the Church in this day. These leaders are greatly needed and may have many affectionate, productive relationships with certain younger men and women. A few young men will be a *Timothy* to some *Paul*. However, those men and women who are not a *Timothy* or a *Paul* will be just as significant in God's plan. Like Daniel, Joseph or Esther, they were uniquely prepared for such a day as this. Let no one say otherwise. *Maranatha!*

# Appendix A:

## Honoring the Truth-Teller

### The Meaning of Truth

The Greek word that is translated *truth* in the New Testament is a very powerful and meaningful word. It is *alethia*. The *a* (alpha) at the beginning of a Greek word often means that it is a negation of the rest of the Greek word. For instance, the English word *atheist* comes from *a-theos* which means literally *no god*. In the case of *alethia* the literal meaning of this word is *nothing hidden*. This means that the phrase found in Scripture that describes the Holy Spirit as the *Spirit of Truth* literally would be the *Spirit who allows nothing to be hidden*.

Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words defines this Greek word that is translated as *truth* as meaning:

*The reality lying at the basis of an appearance, the manifested, veritable essence of a matter.*

This definition should inform us that the Spirit of Truth is always working to move us as believers beyond the *appearance* of a person, a matter or an organization to discover its *reality* and *essence*.

### Leaders Need Truth in Proportion to Influence

The Bible speaks a great deal about the value of truthfulness in relationships. The subject of reproof in Scripture is a good example of this. Only *the fool* and *the wicked man* according to Proverbs cannot hear godly reproof. Reproof is always the truth as someone else sees it. Consider King David's words about his need for those around him to speak to him truthfully from their perspective:

*Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head... Psalm 141:5*

Our responsibility to hear the truth from individuals around us grows in proportion to the sphere of our influence. The larger the influence, the more we need people around us to speak their perception of the truth to us and the less likely they are to do it. Leaders must teach and emphasize truthfulness or they will more likely get affirmation from their subordinates rather than truthfulness.

### **Recognizing the Truth in Different Packages**

The leader must also recognize truth when it comes. It seldom will come in a nice package and identify itself as truth. Truth can come to us in the form of the unflattering opinions of others, angry words, criticisms and even slander. The speakers will almost always see themselves as telling the truth. As King David said in the passage above, sometimes the truth-teller will *smite* us. Nearly all of these kinds of *smiting events* will have an element of truth that needs to be discerned. The leader who is insecure will not glean the truth about himself and his organization from these uncomfortable *truth events* and can dishonor the person seeking to tell the truth. Embraced truth will set us free no matter what package it comes in.

### **Actions and Attitudes Reveal Values**

The leader who verbally encourages truthfulness must be prepared to continue his instruction when he actually gets truthful feedback from his subordinates. If the feedback comes in one of these uncomfortable packages, if he is not careful, he may shut down the flow of information to him by his response. If he acts insecure, angry or quietly withdraws from that person, he teaches by his actions that he does not value truthfulness. In other words, value systems are always observable in the behavior of leaders. For instance, if the leader judges the input of the truth-teller by how well he or she offered that input, the leader will receive

decreasing truthfulness from those around him. He has taught by his attitudes and behavior that truthfulness is not valued. If individuals around him must earn the right to speak the truth to him by proven loyalty, he is training and producing subordinate leaders that will value loyalty over the truth. Leaders who have been trained this way will speak very little truth to him and confuse affirmation with truthful feedback. Neither will they honor the truth-teller when he speaks to them.

### **Speaking the Truth Wisely**

Because the truth is often difficult to hear, it is necessary for those who feel responsibility to speak truth to do it as wisely as possible. Failure to do this insures that we will not spiritually grow up. The Bible connects our *spiritual growth* with *speaking the truth*. It tells us that speaking must be out of the motive of *love*.

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ... Ephesians 4:15*

This means that the truth-teller must have sincere concern for the person and organization that he is speaking to. This is where truth telling becomes an expression of love. In the military, the value system of officers says that they should speak the truth to their commanders. However, there is also a value that says loyalty to the leader means that you speak to him in a way that does not embarrass the leader or damage his reputation within the military organization. Normally, that means that confrontational truth is spoken in private and with proper military courtesy. Conversely, the commander has the responsibility to hear the truth no matter how poorly it was spoken by the subordinate. This requires him to be secure in himself and to earnestly desire the truth from his subordinates. The reaction of the commander to the subordinate's truth-telling will teach the subordinate whether or not he can continue to speak the truth to this particular commander. The same thing is true in the Church and all organizations. Leaders must love the truth, even when it

*smites* them, and appreciate the truth-teller if they want all their subordinates to continue keeping them properly informed.

Leaders of local churches and all organizations of the Church must allow subordinates the right to speak the truth as they see it. They must maintain a value system that honors the person seeking to tell the truth. They must not see truth-telling as disloyal behavior. Failure to do this will produce serious hidden problems within the organizations of the Church and make the truthful person an outcast. This cannot be what the Spirit of Truth, *the Spirit who allows nothing to be hidden* desires in the churches and organizations of the Kingdom of God.

### **Values Produce Predictable Behavior**

Prior to 1993, I was an active duty Army Chaplain. During that season in my life, I taught leadership skills to officers and non-commissioned officers in leadership retreats as a part of my ministry. I often used management games to teach these leaders about leadership. In one management game called “Powerplay”, a scenario is created where these leaders were arbitrarily divided into groups by virtue of winning in a trading scenario. The winning group is then given authority over the other groups. The winning group is given the right to make the rules for future trading and to dictate these rules to the other groups. Without exception, the group that has the authority always begins to make rules to keep its authority and to benefit it as a group in trading. Given enough time the winning group will begin to clearly abuse the other groups. This group will justify its behavior on the basis of winning the earlier portion of the game and by virtue of having the authority.

### **Reactions of Different Abused Groups**

In those retreats where non-commissioned officers (sergeants) were involved, the sergeants would allow themselves to be abused. Their overriding value was loyalty to the authority no matter what transpired or how unfairly they were treated. They were unhappy and grumbled among themselves during the abuse

but did not do anything productive to deal with it. They offered no feedback, no confrontation, and no truth from their perspective to the abusive group of sergeants. This was characteristic of nearly all the sergeants that I played this game with. This revealed that their values were highly loyal but truthfulness was weak as a value. (Of course, there were a few exceptional sergeants that would have been better officers by nature.)

The reactions of the officers in the officer leadership retreats were entirely different. As the group of officers who abused them became more abusive, the officers became increasingly active and alert to their responsibility to deal with the unfair situation. They offered feedback that was largely ignored. They devised *strikes*; in other words, they withdrew and would not cooperate with the abusive authority. They often tried to continue to confront the abusive group. They tried to negotiate a more just situation. In nearly all cases, the group in authority would become increasingly authoritarian and created more rules strictly for their own benefit and to keep the *rebels* in line. The abusive group would often say that the other officer groups were not *playing fair* when they rebelled, withdrew or failed to cooperate. In other words, the group with the authority became blind to their abuse and blamed the abused groups for withdrawing and not wanting to play the game anymore.

### **Not Valuing Truth Results in Blindness**

Blindness is characteristic of organizations and leaders that do not value truthfulness in their relationships. This is because truth telling has been stifled in a loyalty-based organizations or individuals. Because there is no honest feedback, they will often be blind to their abusive behavior and honestly wonder why others are reacting. There will be no one to tell them that it is wrong to shift the blame for difficulties in the relationships to the victims of their abusive behavior.

The value of truth is what keeps a local church or any organization from becoming like a cult. Honoring the truth-teller is a characteristic of godly relationships. Dishonoring the truth-teller is a characteristic of cults. Cultic behavior, which always includes blindness, will result from an overemphasis of loyalty above the truth. Leaders must understand that their own desire for loyalty may overcome truthfulness in their subordinates. They must actively cultivate truthfulness along with loyalty in their subordinates.

### **Different Values and Expectations**

This game also revealed that different kinds of people have different values and expectations. Commissioned Officers are taught in the military that proper submission means that they will speak to the superior officer with *courage* and *candor* (*truthfulness*) about organizational problems. Officers who will not confront their commander when necessary are poor excuses for leaders. Commanders who will not hear the honest, truthful input of their subordinates without penalty are poor commanders.

The *officer type* of leader expects to be treated well by other leaders. He expects his input to be valued and genuinely considered. When the behavior of an organization and its primary leaders do not match the *officer type leader's* values, he will withdraw or try negotiation. If the negotiation fails, he will leave the organization and move on, similar to an officer resigning his commission. The *officer type* of leader will want to fix the organization's larger problems and will not ordinarily be silent about them. If the organizational values lean too far to loyalty and not enough on truthfulness, this type of leader will often be seen as not being a *team player* and be penalized by being privately labeled as such. As a result the organization may lose this valuable leader as he discovers the truth of how the organization actually sees him.

The *sergeant type* of leader will remain loyal to a fault. He will adjust to the problems and not necessary ever speak *truthfully* to

the organization. There is nothing wrong with this type of person; in fact, they are greatly needed in all organizations. However, in unhealthy organizations, the *sergeant type* of leader is valued above the *officer type* of leader. The *officer type* of person can help an organization to deal with its problems and therefore grow. If an organization creates an atmosphere for genuine honesty and truthfulness, it will attract many of the *officer types* of persons and will be able to keep them. It will not lose its *sergeant types* either. In fact, the *sergeant type* of leader will be much happier since problems will be dealt with. Loyal and truthful leaders will ensure that the Church will be prepared to meet the One who declared Himself to be the way, *the truth*, and the life.

### **When Loyalty Overcomes Truthfulness**

Loyalty and truthfulness are two covenant values that must be held in tension against one another. *Loyalty binds us together. The truth sets us free.* If one value is emphasized over the other, then serious problems develop and both values will become distorted. If loyalty is overemphasized, then only affirmation will be given and heard as feedback. If truth telling is practiced without love and without loyalty, it does not build but tears down. If truthfulness is considered a fundamental component of loyalty, then the organization will be built on integrity. If loyalty is considered a fundamental component of truthfulness, then the organization will have true unity.

Often in an organization, whether it is the local church, a business, a denomination, or a fellowship of churches, loyalty becomes the overriding value and begins to overcome truthfulness. This is often revealed in private words, actions and attitudes rather than the official position of the organization. The leaders of an organization may say that they value truthfulness but reveal in their actions that this is not really so. There are several predictable results when this happens:

### **Truth-Tellers are Unappreciated.**

Individuals who strongly value honesty and truthfulness are unappreciated, and often rejected as disloyal. Some people are particularly oriented to truthfulness and may be seen as not being *team players* by those who highly value loyalty. This may create a value conflict in the organization between the truth-tellers and those who highly prize loyalty. The loyalty value normally wins over truthfulness in these kinds of situations because those in authority will often value loyalty over truthfulness.

When the loyalty value wins over truth, it often takes the form of a suppression of free expression, particularly dissent. This does not make the elements of truth in dissent go away; truth will surface again and again in different, even more destructive forms, until it is dealt with properly. This is precisely why political tyrants are unable to completely silence free expression and why they feel the need to silence it. The truth will find a way to express itself simply because it is the truth and God stands behind it.

### **Unintentional Training of Subordinates**

Every time loyalty wins over truthfulness, loyal individuals are unintentionally trained by the leadership to hide the truth or to put an organizational *spin* on it. Truthful individuals are trained that they are not really welcome. Perceptions are created that success and promotion in the organization comes by telling the leadership what they want to hear rather than the truth. Loyal *yes men* can seem to become valued over those who have strong individual integrity and truthfulness.

### **Maintenance of a False Righteousness**

The loyalty-based local church or any organization can defend its righteousness at a high cost to the reputation of individuals. Often the organization fails to deal with its failures in a scriptural way. Instead the organization may blame its failures on the person it failed, even unfairly damaging the person's reputation. The truth is sacrificed to the need of the organization to maintain

a false appearance of not making any serious mistakes. Organizational problems are defended when they are brought to light by distorting the truth by putting an organizational *spin* on it. In contrast, the balancing value of truth persuades all Kingdom organizations to repent, confess their failures, fix their problems and seek forgiveness of the persons that they failed. When failures are handled in a godly way, grace, forgiveness and mercy flow into relationships and healing occurs. When the organization defends its failures at the cost of the reputation of individuals, then it becomes a *revolving door* type of organization.

### **Revolving Door Organizations**

Weakness in the value of truthfulness produces a *revolving door* type of organization over a period of time. Individuals come into the organization, then after perceiving the truth, they try to adjust the organization or adjust to the organization. Often after becoming disillusioned by the reality, they leave the organization. Those who do stay long-term within the organization may also prize loyalty above truth. However, because problems are hidden and often neglected, they create hidden turmoil and strife for these people as well. Hidden disunity becomes a way of life for the loyal members of the organization. They tolerate each other for the sake of the organization. Only open conflict is considered disunity after a time.

### **Key Leaders in Crisis**

The *revolving door* organization becomes a *house of cards* over a period of time because of hidden problems and disunity. A key leader may have a profound dealing from the Spirit of Truth and wake up to the seriousness of the organization's hidden problems. This can create a destructive crisis between leaders as a key leader begins to speak the truth in a loyalty-based organization. Truth must be highly valued or the integrity of an organization becomes weakened and cannot maintain its

membership. Loyalty alone cannot keep an organization together. Truth will always be necessary for long-term success.

### **Reputation Saturation Points**

The reputation of the organization will begin to suffer for failure to listen to the truth. Many people will come through the *revolving door* over a period of time. They will know the details of the problems of the organization and the organization's capacity to hide or to put a *spin* on them. They may have become embittered by the organization sacrificing their reputations to maintain its own. The organizational growth stops and begins a long and steady decline because of reaching a *reputation saturation point* with many people speaking badly about the organization's treatment of individuals and failure to deal with problems. The loyalty-based organization, however, will be blind to the real reasons for its decline. This is because it has few truth-tellers anymore. Its spiritual eyes have been dishonored and are now gone. It will offer alternative explanations and shift the blame once again.

### **Sincere Relationships in the Church**

The concept of *sincerity* may be the best blend of the values of loyalty and truthfulness. A sincere person is a person who out of loyalty to God and others speaks the truth without mixture. The word *sincere* comes from the Latin word *sincerus*. It literally means *without wax*. This word comes from the time when the Romans were building great buildings using marble columns to support the weight of these monumental buildings. The builders would go to the marble cutters in the quarries and inspect the columns. The cutters would put wax in the cracks of columns to make them deceptively appear to be solid in order to sell them. The builders could only use the *sincere* columns to build with. The columns that were what they appeared to be, that were actually solid, without wax hiding cracks, were the only thing that would sustain the weight of the building. If a builder built a building using a column that lacked *sincerity*, the entire building could fall down. The parallels are evident. The Spirit of Truth

needs *sincere* people to build the Church; people that value loyalty and truthfulness in harmony with each other.

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