

The practical value of what we believe is proven in implementation. Faith that saves is a living thing, and in the living of our faith, its value is truly seen. If our faith translates inaccurately into how we live, then what we believe may save our souls, but our testimony is compromised and His kingdom advance hindered. If our faith is not incarnate, others have a legitimate right to question our beliefs. Jesus said it this way: "You will know them by their fruits."

Accurate thought expressed inaccurately has consequences. Legitimate biblical concepts held in an unhealed heart, implemented with unclean hands, propagated with crooked feet, and expressed beyond legitimate boundaries, are ruined. That which is intended for good ends up causing harm.

The concept of spiritual fathers and sons<sup>1</sup> fits the above categorization. It's a legitimate biblical concept and it has associated benefits and risks. The problem is not in the belief per se. It's in the expression. It's my conviction from the Scriptures, as well as from subjective observation, that the f/s paradigm, as it is widely believed and practiced, needs some adjustment. In some cases, it just needs a tune up. In other cases the wheels are off the bus and the engine is throwing piston rods.

A scalpel's potential for benefit or harm is entirely in the hands of the surgeon. Properly trained and gifted surgeons maximize benefit and minimize risk, even when pain is inevitably part of the process. The f/s scalpel is not bad, and pain is always part of the process. However, some of the hands implementing the f/s scalpel are a bit shaky and there's arterial bleeding in the Body of Christ. The f/s idea needs to be implemented with the spiritual equivalent of surgical skill to avoid traumatizing the Body of Christ with good intentions.

The f/s ministry paradigm also has very specific, biblically designed-for-life, boundaries of expression that are routinely violated by the well meaning misinformed, the unhealed insecure, and propagandists with a personal agenda.

I realize that this effort might be relevant to only a small segment of a small segment of the Body of Christ. Most believe apostles and prophets do not exist today. Many have no exposure to the "father-son" paradigm of ministry. They will have little to no understanding of what I am talking about. Others might theoretically believe in these things, but have little or no practical experience. Others might have experience but they've not run into some of the issues I address herein (If you have any tenure at all within so-called "apostolic and prophetic" environments, and if honesty prevailed, I would doubt it).

These folks might think I'm too negative, that I'm throwing the baby out with the bath water, and that I can only see the things that are wrong, that things "aren't that bad," that their experience in spiritual parenting has been great, and so on. I would respond to you that just because you've not experienced what I have does not negate my experience. You do not receive the emails that I do from around the world. I receive testimony after testimony of chaos and abuse that leaves lives in ruin. God cares about these folks and wants them set free, healed, and restored.

***If these issues don't apply to you, rejoice! You've been blessedly protected.*** However, thousands of others have not been so fortunate. The things I am writing about are epidemic and considered normative within apostolic and prophetic circles. Variations on these themes are common elsewhere. I pray that the content herein ***will never be useful to you.*** Nothing would make me happier. But the day may come for you, or for someone you know, that this material's relevance could significantly change.

Part I herein examines thirteen areas in which the f/s ministry paradigm is being implemented poorly, exceeding legitimate biblical boundaries, or careening into falsehood and abuse. Part II discusses some unique elements of the relationship between apostles and prophets that intersect the "father-son" ministry issue.

---

<sup>1</sup>1 Corinthians 4:15 et al., - no gender specificity is implied in these terms, hereafter abbreviated f/s.