

## Developing a Father's Heart

As our life progresses, there are two major phases: we are first sons and later become fathers. So, we reach a point where we are both sons and fathers. We have to learn to be a son before we can become a father.

There are three stages of growth in the Lord:

1. Servant
2. Son
3. Father.

Under the Old Covenant, the people of God were servants. He was their God and they were His people and they were to obey and serve Him. We have a better Covenant under the New Testament—He is our Father and we are His Children.

**Galatians 4:6-7** And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. (7) Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Our problem is that we don't grow up as Sons to become fathers but instead remain at the level of a servant.

**Galatians 4:1-2** Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; (2) But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

God puts us under teachers to learn how to administrate the father's business as a son. Until that time, the heir is no different than a servant. It is important that we learn to serve but it is more important that we grow up and learn how to take our place as the heir.

We can get a picture of the Father's heart in the parable of the Prodigal Son.

**Luke 15:11-32** And he said, A certain man had two sons: (12) And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. (13) And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. (14) And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. . . . (17) And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (18) I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, (19) And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. (20) And he arose, and came to his father. . . . (21) And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. (22) But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: (23) And bring

hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: (24) For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry. (25) Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing. (26) And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. (27) And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. (28) And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and entreated him. (29) And he answering said to his father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends: . . . (31) And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. (32) It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

The son took his inheritance and wasted it upon himself and his own pleasure. When it was gone, he had nothing and was reduced to the lowest possible job, which did not provide enough for him to have food to eat. He decided that servants in his father's house had it better than he did, so he went home with the intention of being a servant if his father would have him. But the father had enough servants, what he wanted was his son and refused to receive him as a servant but instead placed him back into the family as his son.

The oldest son was offended that his father would receive the younger son back and was jealous of his reception. His justification for his offense was the fact that he had *served* his father for all of his years. The essence of the father's answer was you have always been my son, but you didn't act like it, but, instead, have acted as a servant.

This idea is also reflected in Jesus' words toward His disciples.

**John 15:15** Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

The disciples had grown up enough that they could understand the purpose of the work of the Lord. They had reached a point that they could participate in the purposes of God. Jesus revealing to them all that He had heard from the Father had achieved this. In other words, He had shown them the full expression of the Father's heart, which included His plans and purposes. They had reached a point where they could understand the paternal plan of the Father.

There are four phases of the paternal plan of God:

- 1) to be – creaturehood
- 2) to become -- Sonship – participation
- 2) to share -- heirship – appropriation
- 3) to reign -- throneship – qualification

### **Phase 1 of the Paternal Plan**

When God created Adam, he had the full *potential* to fulfill the purpose of God. However, he never realized that potential because sin *disqualified* him from it. Therefore, in our unregenerate state, we are simply creatures of God, separated from Him and strangers to His plans.

### **Phase 2 of the Paternal Plan**

Through, Jesus, the Son, God has made a way that we might become the Sons of God and as sons participate in the family purpose.

**John 1:12-13** But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our participation in becoming sons of God is revealed by our need to be led by the Spirit of God.

**Romans 8:14-15** For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (15) For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

If the Spirit does not lead us, we are not acting as sons but are only servants as discussed earlier. The purpose of becoming a son is that it causes us to be able to inherit--to become an heir.

### **Phase 3 of the Paternal Plan**

A son becomes an heir when he has received the father's instructions and obeyed them from his heart. In other words, he has been imbued with the father's heart. Normally, the "black sheep" of a family doesn't receive the inheritance because the father doesn't trust him to take care of it.

**Romans 8:17** And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

**Galatians 4:7** Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

As children we become heirs of God and join-heirs with Christ. This is conditional on us suffering with him. We appropriate our inheritance by identifying with the suffering of Jesus so that we can be glorified with Him also.

### **Phase 4 of the Paternal Plan**

Once we share in his heirship then we must be qualified to reign with Him. He is now on His throne in the heavens. We, as believers, are made to sit together in the heavenly places; however, we are not sitting with Him in His throne.

**Ephesians 2:6** And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

However, for us to reign with Him (sit with Him in His throne) we have to qualify. Reigning with Him is something that He only grants to those who overcome. (This is not salvation that we are talking about.)

**Revelation 3:21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

There are some things that we receive from the Lord as gifts: His life, His spirit, and His nature. There are other things that must be developed: His character, His mind, and His vision. Fulfilling His purpose is a product of training, overcoming, discipline, trials, hardship, and intensive spiritual qualifying.