

Father's Day – Marja's Testimony

I think I was the one at the planning meeting who suggested that “spiritual fathers” could be a topic for today, but when Bastian asked me to say a few words, I really had to think hard whether I had any experience of one.

My mind went back to my seventh grade teacher Mr Matuschka. I went to a Christian school in Australia for a few years which was a blessing. Mr Matuschka was very strict and very old in my 12 year old opinion...he was at least 45! But I remember him to have been very fair and loving...he took the time to speak to me and I felt secure with him as my teacher because he was so sure about his faith and principles.

The only lessons of his that I remember with any depth are his religion lessons. I hung on to every word – he had a way of making the religion lessons both personal and relevant. I haven't been good at memorizing Bible passages off by heart, and one of the only ones I do remember, he taught our class: **Ephesians 2: 8 – 9. For by grace you have been saved by faith, this is not of your own doing, it is the gift of God, not because of works, lest any man should boast”.**

I also remember how strongly he taught about Jesus being important. The words Christ Alone stand out when I think of him. I remember him telling about the death of his 8 year old daughter and how he simply put the words, “With Jesus” on his daughter's grave. Years later when my own daughter died, we put the same inscription on her grave. “With Jesus.” Jesus alone is the hope for us who believe in him!

So, a spiritual father is an older male, not necessarily only a teacher or pastor, but someone who has encouraged you in your spiritual development and pointed you into the direction of Jesus. A spiritual father is someone who is a sensible and responsible role model and example of the Christian faith; and of course he takes the time to notice you and treat you as a valuable person. **He inspires you to keep believing in and seeking God.**

I am sure you can think of spiritual fathers in your own life. They are a blessing from our Heavenly father. While we are here on this earth, as the body of Christ, we are family to each other and we need encouragement and strength from each other for our faith. Each one of us in whatever age/ stage of life we are in has a role in our spiritual family in God's kingdom. If we can't be a spiritual father – we can be brothers, sisters and mothers in Christ.

If you are an older man, may I encourage you to seek ways to be a spiritual father to those younger than you or newer in the faith than you. The love and example of older men is much needed in today's day and age to reflect our Father in Heaven!

St Paul gives good advice in Titus 2: 2:

“Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.” By following St Paul's advice, your example will edify and encourage younger believers – your spiritual children – to grow closer to Jesus and to be more like Him.

Thank you Father God for spiritual fathers!