

LEVEL FOUR
THE FATHERS
pathr
THE LEVEL OF MATURITY

I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. 2:13
I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. 2:14

I. THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

- A. THEY KNOW GOD** – "You know Him who has been from the beginning."
- 1. They have intimate relationship with God that encompasses His allness.** They aren't merely focused on God as a healer or giver of good gifts, but as the sovereign Lord of glory.
 - 2. This knowledge of God strongly suggests that they are worshippers.** Lest we interpret this to mean that they merely sing choruses, let me state that as worshippers they live lives that declare God to have the highest place in their lives.
- B. THEY ARE MATURE** – This is suggested by John's use of the term "fathers." The Greek term translated *fathers* is *pathr* and refers to a *father, elder, senior or mature one*. Vine says that the root of *pater* points to a *nourisher, protector or upholder*. They have put away childish things (1Cor. 13:11). They are no longer struggling with the basic issues of Christianity, such as doctrine, authority, character and so on. They have weathered some storms and know something about life and serving God. They are seasoned men and women of God.

II. SOME OBSERVATIONS

- A. THEY ARE FAMILY OR BODY CONSCIOUS.** Again, the term *father* suggests this. They see themselves as a part of a family and thus seek the edification of others.
- B. THEY ARE THE SPIRITUAL BACKBONE OF THE CHURCH.**

"You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we have behaved toward you believers; just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children" (1Thess. 2:10-11).

"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!" (1Cor. 4:14-15)

- 1.** They set the **EXAMPLE** for younger believers.
 - 2.** They are the ones who **RESTORE** the weak and those who have fallen.
 - 3.** They **ENCOURAGE** those who are about to fall out of the way, without bruising them.
 - 4.** They are **MENTORS**, because they have a **FATHER'S HEART** toward the members of the body.
 - 5.** Because they are highly respected, they are often called upon to **DISCIPLINE** those who are out of step with the Body or the Word.
- C. THEY ARE FRUITFUL**
- 1.** In good works.
 - 2.** In evangelism.
 - 3.** In discipling others.
 - 4.** In praise.
- D. THEY KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERING.** Like Paul, they may even bear in their body the marks of the Lord Jesus. They know the work of the cross and the fire.
- E. THEY KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THE RESURRECTED LIFE.** They have experienced death to self and the manifestation of Christ's life. What they do, they do by His enablement.
- F. THEY ARE VERY PROTECTIVE.** They can spot a wolf a mile off. They are often misjudged as being critical because of their ability to discern false teachers, false prophets and troublemakers.
- G. THOUGH GIFTED, THEY GIVE PLACE TO OTHERS.** They are more interested in the development of other and the Body than in the demonstration of their spirituality or gifting.

H. **THEY ARE VERY STABLE.** They are loyal to and committed to the growth of the Body. They are willing to lay down their life for the advancement and health of God's people. This provides the Church with a sense of security.

III. **THEIR PROBLEMS**

A. **THE ABUSE OF THEIR AUTHORITY.**

B. **IF THEY BECOME PROUD AND UNTEACHABLE THEY WILL LOSE THEIR EFFECTIVENESS.**

C. **THEY MUST GUARD THEMSELVES AGAINST PRIDE.**

D. **IF THEY FALL THEY DEVASTATE MANY PEOPLE.**

IV. **CONCLUSION** – Those who reach level four and mistakenly think they have arrived are the greatest evidence that there is more. (See Jeremiah 33:3.)