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Toward an Inclusive Model

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Spiritual Fathering in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Southern and Western Africa: Toward an Inclusive Model

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This article studied the metaphor of spiritual fathering within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in southern and western Africa. In these churches, the pastor of a congregation is not only perceived as a shepherd of the flock but also as a spiritual father. The main study findings revealed three challenges of spiritual fathering: exclusion of women, ill-treatment of spiritual children, and Gender Based Violence (GBV). Spiritual fathering neglects the role of women pastors and women church founders in spiritual parenting. Similarly, some imbalances exist in the relationship between spiritual fathers and spiritual children. Some “spiritual fathers” use spiritual fathering to perpetuate GBV and other types of abuse. The main objective of this article is to redefine the metaphor of “spiritual fathering” in the religious community through the parenthood model as a theoretical framework. The article recommends inclusive metaphor in contrast to the current challenges of spiritual fathering in popular religion.

Keywords: Spiritual Fathering, Parenthood Model, Gender, African Pentecostalism, Pastoring

Introduction

This article reimagines the concept of the pastor as a spiritual father in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in southern and western Africa (Anderson 1992, 2002, 2005; Frahm-Arp 2010; Mashau 2013; Kgatle 2019). It looks at the practice of spiritual fathering in western and southern African countries such as Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and South Africa, which is common in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Kalu (2008, 184) in Pondani (2019, 29) defines spiritual fathering as “a situation where leaders encourage members to refer to their spiritual leaders as ‘fathers in the Lord,’ conveying warm images of intimacy drawn from a family setting but further entrenching patriarchal and gerontocratic authority patterns.”

Scholars acknowledge that in many Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity domains across western and southern Africa, the pastor of a congregation is not only the shepherd but also perceived as the spiritual father of that congregation (Ukah 2003; Chitando, Gunda, and Kügler 2013; Dube 2018; Fenga 2018; Ramantswana 2018; Pondani 2019; Ojo 2020). According to Fenga (2018, 150), spiritual fathering is a “well-known and widely used aphorism in neo-Pentecostal Christianity in Zimbabwe.” Also, Dube (2018, 1), writing from a Zimbabwean urban context, points out, “the senior Church Pastor, known by various names—prophet, a man of God or Bishop—regards himself as the ‘spiritual father’ to all church members.” Zimbabwean-born Prophet Emmanuel Makandiwa calls Ghanaian Prophet Victor Kusi Boateng his spiritual father (Chitando, Gunda, and Kügler 2013). Fenga (2018) continues to note that these titles are used to perpetuate the influence of spiritual fathering in the Pentecostal movement. This is further enhanced by citing biblical examples such as Elijah fathering Elisha in the Old Testament, and Paul fathering Titus, Timothy, and Onesimus in the New Testament (Fenga 2018). Thompson (2019, 8) concurs that:

Traditionally, much of the world may understand the concept of a father as a male parent to a child as well as the concept of a son or daughter as a child to a parent. In

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other situations, priests, pastors, ministers, preachers, clergymen, and other men that may be identified as men of the cloth may be identified as fathers.

The concept of spiritual fathering in these churches also means that ordinary members become spiritual children, affectionately known as spiritual sons and daughters. Ojo (2020, 7; Ukah 2003), from a Nigerian context, adds, “members relate to the leader-founders of these churches as their spiritual parents, often calling them ‘Daddy’ and ‘Mummy’ or ‘Father in the Lord,’ respectfully bowing, or kneeling, down to them. These names reveal the level of bond and emotional attachments.” Also, the names reveal that the responsibilities of the pastor go beyond preaching, praying, and counseling; they extend to parenting. Where this is the case, according to Ramantswana (2018), it is difficult for congregants to reprimand or bring correction to a pastor when they go wrong.

The concept of a pastor as a spiritual father has been examined in previous studies by different scholars. This article problematizes the metaphor of spiritual fathering, and it proposes a comprehensive and inclusive model within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in southern and western Africa. Again, it aims to fill this gap by presenting a model that deals with the abuses of “spiritual parenting” but acknowledges women spiritual parents using the parenthood model. The parenthood model is introduced as a theoretical framework in a way it manifests in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Moreover, the work outlines the uses and importance of spiritual fathering in many African contexts such as Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. However, the main findings of abuses identified in this work are the exclusion of women, imbalances in the relationship between spiritual fathers and spiritual children, and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The article recommends a comprehensive and inclusive model that recognizes genders other than males. Data were collected from available literature on the metaphor of spiritual fathering. Some of the information was obtained using websites of the churches and other online sources. The online sources help bring out the original data on GBV. In addition, social media platforms including YouTube videos were consulted specifically on the section dealing with GBV by some spiritual fathers.

The Main Question in the Study

What are the challenges of the metaphor of spiritual fathering, and how can these challenges be addressed in popular religion specifically in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in southern and western Africa?

Theoretical Framework: The Parenthood Model

Parenting is a more recent term that developed only in the mid-twentieth century. According to Faircloth, Hoffman, and Layne (2013, 1), “from an anthropological perspective, which emphasizes cultural variability, parenting might be seen as a particular historically and socially situated form of childbearing, a product of late twentieth century ideological shifts around family, kinship, risk, and social morality.” In Africa, parenthood goes beyond the immediate responsibility of the biological parents in taking care of the children. Bunge (2001, 467) asserts that “the responsibility includes and depends on wider circles of care that extend beyond biological parents.” Households recognize that any other older adult can take responsibility for raising children in communities (Dube 2018). This extended parenthood in many African contexts results in an African child perceiving any older adult as their parent: for example, a teacher, a pastor, older adult neighbor, community leader, and relatives such as uncles, aunties, and the like. Children are expected to respect these different types of parents in the same way they respect their biological parents (Hunter 2014). This definition of parenthood is the reason members of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity feel completely comfortable in calling

their pastors their spiritual fathers. African Pentecostalism is also a movement centered on a sense of togetherness and a sense of belonging to a community (Meyer 2010; Cazarin 2019). In other words, members in these churches are comfortable calling a pastor “Daddy” or “Papa” because they are already used to calling an uncle or adult neighbor the same.

Parenthood in many African contexts includes both father and mother; however, it is correct to say most children in Africa are raised by single mothers (Meyer 2018). According to Galal (2021, 1), “as of 2019, 41.8 percent of households in South Africa were female-headed, which amounted to a total of approximately 7.2 million.” While we cannot rule out the possibility that many adults in the form of uncles and aunties have been involved in the abuse of the children of their extended family, this cannot take away the main role of parenthood in taking care of and mentoring children. Therefore, extrapolated to successful spiritual parenthood, one can say that it needs to move away from any form of GBV and abuses, exclusion of women, and mistreatment of spiritual children. Hence, this study aims to rethink the role of spiritual fathering using the parenthood model. In examining the parenthood model, it focuses on the role of both father and mother in parenting their children. On this basis, the article also argues that spiritual parenthood needs to take cognizance of women pastors as much as it recognizes men.

Spiritual Fathering across Southern and Western Africa

As highlighted in the preceding sections, spiritual fathering is very common in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in countries such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. In South Africa, famous prophets such as Shepherd Bushiri of the Enlightened Christian Gathering have come out openly to recognize a spiritual father in his life. For example, Bushiri recognizes a Zimbabwean-born but UK-based prophet Uebert Angel as his spiritual father (Kgatle 2021). Uebert Angel used to call a Ghanaian prophet Victor Kusi Boateng his spiritual father, but he has recently changed his stance and now recognizes a Nigerian pastor, Chris Oyakilome, as his spiritual father. Bushiri has spiritual sons and daughters in different provinces in South Africa. Many of them do recognize Bushiri for playing a major role in mentoring and coaching them toward attaining success in their careers. Some of these sons and daughters are well-known celebrities, football players, and even politicians. Tiyani Mabunda, a well-known football player in South Africa, tends to thank his spiritual father, Bushiri, each time he wins a football match with his team, Mamelodi Sundowns (Nyasa 2018). Similarly Naledi Chirwa, a member of parliament, publicly acknowledges her father in the Lord, Bushiri, for helping her to become a member of parliament (Nkanjeni 2019).

Also, in Zimbabwe, Emmanuel Makandiwa had a spiritual father, Prophet Victor Kusi Boateng from Ghana (Fenga 2018). Walter Magaya of PHD Ministries asserts that Temitope Balogun Joshua, popularly known as TB Joshua, is his spiritual father from Nigeria. TB Joshua passed on June 7, 2021, and many of his spiritual sons were shocked by this event as they still looked up to him for fathering (Oduor 2021). Similarly, Apostle Tavonga Vutabwashe has Prophet Robert Kayanja from Uganda as his spiritual father (Fenga 2018). Chitando, Gunda, and Kügler (2013) confirm that most of these prophets in Zimbabwe have spiritual fathers from western African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana. Mangena and Mhizha (2013) explain that Zimbabwean prophets get attracted to spiritual fathers from West Africa to receive powers to perform miracles through the laying on of hands. Shoko and Chiwara (2013, 213) point out, “In a bid to try and find more power, [Prophet Makandiwa] was then mentored by a foreign spiritual father who sometimes visits him to assess progress.” The followers of Prophet Makandiwa have the propensity of calling him (Mapuranga, Chitando, and Gunda 2013).

In Nigeria, a genealogy of spiritual fathering can be traced from the times of the well-known Archbishop Benson Idahosa. Idahosa is perceived to have had a huge influence on successful pastors such as Nigerian Dr. David Oyedepo of Living Faith Church Worldwide,

Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor of Word of Life Bible Church, and Archbishop Nicholas Duncan-Williams of Action Chapel International (Eagles Media Network, n.d.). Of the three, Oyedepo is the most successful as his churches have been established in 300 cities in Nigeria as well as in 45 cities in other parts Africa. In addition, Oyedepo has set up two universities: Covenant University and Landmark University. Oyedepo has spiritual sons who are equally successful, such as Pastor Paul Enenche of the Dunamis International Gospel Centre, Pastor David Ibiyeomie of Salvation Ministries, Pastor Sam Adeyemi of Daystar Christian Centre, Femi Emmanuel of Living spring Chapel International, Pastor Adepoju Oyemade of Sword of the Spirit Ministries, Pastor Samuel Oluwasegun Olubiyo of Word of Power Global Ministries, Pastors Yemi Davids of Global Impact Church, and Pastor Ntia Ntia of Full Life Christian Centre (Nobelie 2020). This genealogy demonstrates that spiritual fathering has been a practice for a long time in Nigeria.

Spiritual fathering is practiced in different Pentecostal churches in sub-Saharan Africa. Most individuals who are recognized as spiritual fathers are male pastors and bishops in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. In addition, a group of individuals submitting to a specific spiritual father form a specific network of spiritual sons. Principal spiritual father figures such as Chris Oyakilome, the late TB Joshua, David Oyedepo, and Enoch Adeboye have strong networks with many spiritual sons across the world. However, the challenge is that these networks exclude women in the categorization of spiritual parenting in the metaphor of spiritual fathering. These challenges are discussed in the main findings of the study below.

The Main Findings of the Study

Exclusion of Women Pastors and Women Church Founders

The main question in this section is what about women pastors and women church founders? It is widely accepted that the pastor's wife in many congregational settings in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity plays the role of the spiritual mother. Dube (2018, 3) points out, "Because of her proximity to the pastor, the pastor's wife plays the role of the spiritual mother which recasts the role of the traditional Auntie to women and girls." Ojo (2020, 63) concurs, "In some Pentecostal churches, wives of Pastors are automatically recognized as ministers while many of the wives of the founders are co-pastors or presiding bishops with their husbands." In addition, most pastors in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity publicly recognize their wives as cofounders of their ministries, thus affirming their roles in co-parenting the members of their churches. There is also a common concept of "first lady" in these churches, which in a way recognizes the role of the pastor's wife in the local church. As mentioned earlier, congregants would often call the pastor's wife "Mommy" to express their affection and respect for her. In this article, this fact is not debatable; however, the challenge remains where many women lead congregations on their own without their husbands being in ministry as well. Are they also called spiritual mothers like the pastors' wives? This is a contentious issue since these women leaders are not just taking care of women and girls like pastors' wives do, but they take care of both women and men in their churches. They are not like a pastor's wife but more like the single women in households who take on the role of both father and mother at the same time.

There have been and still are notable women pastors in South Africa within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity such as the late Pastor Christina Nku of St John's Apostolic Faith Mission, the late Pastor Mannete Elizabeth Chaba of Rock of Ages Global Ministries (Chaba 2015), Pastor Mpfariseni Mukhuba of Unity Fellowship Church, the Pastor Irene Tshifhiwa of Divine Truth World Restoration, Bishop Bertha Mphahlele of New Generation Church, and many more. These women have contributed hugely to the growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in South Africa; some of them still play a big role today. In Ibadan in Nigeria, and elsewhere, women pastors are running successful mega-churches such as Bishop

Margaret Idahosa of Church of God Mission International, Reverend Mrs. Tope Ogunnoiki of Grace Ville Chapel International, Reverend Mrs. Tina Bawa of Tina Bawa Ministries, Bishop Bola Odeleke of Power Pentecostal Church, Prophetess Mary Olubori of Rock of Salvation Apostolic Church, Apostle Helen Ukpabio, the founder of Liberty Foundation Gospel Ministries (Liberty Gospel Church), Calabar, and many others. This type of woman leader can also be found in other countries such as Uganda, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and so forth. Although some of the women such as Bishop Margret Idahosa have inherited their ministry from their late husbands, most of these women are founders of their ministries. And the question remains, should they take the same title in terms of spiritual parenting as pastors' wives or be called "spiritual mothers"? Or should they have a new title that incorporates their dual role as father and mother of their ministries and churches? This article aims to answer this question.

According to the parenthood model, the presence of both parents is pivotal in the nurturing of their children. Where that is the case, it potentially provides a conducive environment for children to feel safe and well protected in their daily lives (Copalan 2019). However, when the father passes on or the husband divorces his wife, most women can play the role of both the father and the mother simultaneously (Boyett, Tarver, and Gleason 2020). This does not imply that the children will not feel the vacuum left by their father, but that the mother could mitigate such a vacuum to a certain degree (Bergin et al. 2018). This also indicates that, in the spiritual language, a woman pastor oversees the ministry by playing the role of both father and mother. From this understanding, the roles of a woman pastor are not on the same level as a pastor's wife who only complements what her husband has already established in ministry. Women pastors, therefore, cannot be called "spiritual fathers" given their female gender, in the same way as biological single mothers are not called "fathers" because the role of women pastors remains more significant than that of wives of pastors. Therefore, these women pastors and women church founders in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity should receive the same recognition of spiritual parenthood as their male counterparts. If they do not, this lack of recognition possibly represents the exclusion of women, which, in turn, will have a very negative effect on spiritual parenting.

Many women have founded Pentecostal churches and are continuing to pastor these churches, including playing the role of parenting the spiritual children in these churches. This role should not be confused with the one played by pastors' wives, who sometimes copastor churches with their husbands. Women pastors and women church founders are spiritual parents in their own rights. But the current function of the metaphor of spiritual fathering excludes these women when referring to spiritual parents. Hence, the call for a more comprehensive and inclusive model for spiritual parenting.

Imbalances in the Relationship between a Spiritual Father and Spiritual Children

First, the spiritual fathers at times place some demands on spiritual children which can compromise their relationship. Kunze, in Dube (2018, 4), asserts that "some spiritual parents favor mentoring daughters or sons who are working and with financial means than those who are poor." This also sometimes means that leadership positions in the church would be given to sons and daughters who are doing well financially. In addition, Pondani (2019, 45) notes, "Sometimes, access to meet one on one with the 'spiritual' father has a financial cost attached to it." Normally, the pastor must pray for his or her congregants when they do need prayer. However, some pastors who use the appellation of "spiritual father" tend to demand an extra offering to pray for their spiritual children. This is surprising because Jesus commanded his disciples to freely give as they were freely given (Mt. 10:8).

Second, spiritual fathering can become imbalanced when it takes over biological fathering or parenting. In other words, this happens when the spiritual children no longer respect and honor their biological parents because they now have spiritual parents. Dube (2018, 6) states

that “the practice conflicts with the roles of biological parents who may see their role and material benefits from their children hijacked by foxy ‘spiritual parents.’ ” An extreme example was evident in the testimonies that came out during the Timothy Omotoso trial in which 20 to 30 girls were forced to leave their homes and families to stay with their “spiritual father” (Kgatle and Frahm-Arp 2022). In this case, spiritual fathering competed with biological fathering instead of complementing it. Spiritual fathering does not have to replace biological fathering; similarly, spiritual fathers on earth do not have to replace God, the Father in heaven.

Last, the main challenge of natural fatherhood within the parenthood model is the huge absence of fathers. This challenge manifests itself in spiritual parenting where there is equally an absence of spiritual fathers. Some spiritual fathers are only too ready to collect a check from their spiritual sons and daughters but are not there for them especially when they need them most. They are quite happy to be fathers when things are going well in the lives of their spiritual children, but when these children face challenges, the fathers often disappear and are nowhere to be found. This is sad because the opposite should be true of a spiritual father; as Fenga (2018) states, the value that spiritual fathers bring into the lives of their sons must be noticeable in them and be valuable in every area of their lives. This includes families, marriage, career, business, and much more. Having said that, a spiritual father must care for his sons. He confirms their safety, contributes to their well-being, and mollifies whatever dangers may be laid in their paths. As the spiritual father looks out for his children, he must alert them of any looming danger.

In summary, spiritual fathering results in certain imbalances in the relationship between spiritual fathers and their children. The spiritual fathers demand certain responsibilities from their spiritual children that they are not willing to reciprocate in principle. Some spiritual fathers perceive spiritual parenting as a replacement for biological parenting. Some spiritual fathers want to only receive benefits from their spiritual children but are not present in the lives of their spiritual children. These challenges too call for a more comprehensive model that will bring a balance to the relationship between spiritual fathers and their children.

Gender-Based Violence and Other Abuses

Spiritual fathers in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity are at times involved in GBV and other types of abuse against women in the form of sexual harassment and rape, especially in South Africa. There is a tendency of spiritual fathers to touch women without sensitivity to their femininity and privacy. According to Agazue (2016, 10), this is done to convince “the female victims that the sex acts will save them from being possessed by an evil spirit or simply enable them to fulfill the will of God.” So, women, including those who are married, are forced to open up to these spiritual fathers in the hope that the will of God will be fulfilled in their lives. In addition, these spiritual fathers take advantage of those women who are desperate and who face several issues. The other factor is the trust that these women place in these spiritual fathers—so much so that these women perceive the spiritual fathers as being infallible. Hence, they are forced to undress before their spiritual fathers in the name of prayer or getting help.

Therefore, repeatedly, when praying for women, spiritual fathers will touch them inappropriately citing the reason that this can effect change in their lives. There is pictorial evidence showing one spiritual father who prayed for women, who were kneeling at the river undressed, who believed God will resolve marriage-related problems. This father was shown praying for such women by touching their buttocks (Admin in Africa 2015). Some spiritual fathers tend to touch their female congregants inappropriately when praying for them (Kgatle 2017, 2021). Other spiritual fathers have followed suit by praying for women without respecting the body integrity of these women. This type of inappropriate touching has become a norm for some of the spiritual fathers within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. These acts are considered sexual harassment and a violation of human rights as well as the degradation of the value and status of women in society. However, many women who have gone through these

experiences are afraid to come out because they view their pastors as “spiritual fathers.” Moreover, as highlighted above, women who face different challenges in their marriages and families believe that whatever the spiritual father does in faith will bring positive change in their lives. They only regret the actions of the spiritual father when it results in rape or another form of sexual harassment.

Furthermore, spiritual leaders have often used the appellation “spiritual father” and titles such as “Daddy,” “Papa,” and “Man of God” to fuel their abuse of women within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. This represents a form of patriarchy because these titles demand the respect that church members are expected to give to their pastors. Thus, when spiritual leaders request sexual favors using these titles, their followers—of whom the majority are women—end up acceding to their requests. A video of a South African pastor, Bishop Israel Makamu, requesting a sexual favor from his spiritual daughter, whom he referred to as “ngwanaka,” which means “my child,” while she referred to him as “Daddy,” went viral not long ago. Another example is that of the Nigerian Timothy Omotoso who used the title “spiritual fathering” to allegedly request sexual favors from girls in his church (Qukula 2018). In instances like this, women are forced to submit to their spiritual fathers who demand that these women undress and have sexual encounters with them (Agazue 2016). It is a well-established ethic that it is outrageous to have sexual intercourse with someone who is a father figure; furthermore, a father figure is supposed to protect the child from sexual abuse.

There have been some instances of spiritual fathers engaging in the abuse of their spiritual children, specifically women. This presents spiritual fathering as a metaphor that grants male pastors power over women and girls in these Pentecostal churches. It is very rare in an African context for women pastors to abuse their male members by touching them inappropriately when praying for them. Titles such as “spiritual father” are used to demand sexual favors from women and girls in these churches, which sometimes result in cases of rape and other sexual assaults. This presents a negative and very unfortunate use of the metaphor of spiritual fathering, which calls for a rethinking and a reimagination in an African context.

Recommendations: An Inclusive Metaphor for Spiritual Parenthood

The main findings in this study on spiritual fathering show that the practice is currently tainted with examples of abuse such as GBV, exclusion of women pastors and women church founders, and mistreatment of spiritual children. Therefore, there is a need to ask a question, is “spiritual fathering” an appropriate metaphor for a religious community and society? How can the main challenges of spiritual fathering be addressed in popular religion specifically in Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity? This article recommends a comprehensive and inclusive metaphor for spiritual parenthood: using the inclusivist metaphor of “spiritual parenting” rather than the exclusivist “spiritual fathering.” In using the inclusivist metaphor, both male and female pastors have an equal opportunity to parent their spiritual children.

The inclusivist metaphor is gender inclusive. In a gender-inclusive society, spiritual fathering cannot be a correct model because there is a need to acknowledge the role of women pastors and women church founders in spiritual parenting. These women, as previously discussed, have often single-handedly established churches, and they have pastored and continue to successfully pastor these churches in many different contexts in Africa. The role of these women should be separated from the conventional role of the pastors’ wives, whose work complements that of their husbands. The work of a woman as a pastor and that of the pastor’s wife is not comparable in terms of spiritual parenting. An inclusivist model acknowledges women pastors located in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Nigeria, and elsewhere in Africa. Consequently, it is a model that endorses women as spiritual parents that take care of both men and women in the church as opposed to pastors’ wives who only lead women and girls in their respective congregations. Spiritual fathering is not an appropriate metaphor as it excludes these

women, as discussed in the preceding sections. The inclusivist model also brings a balance to the relationship between spiritual children and spiritual fathers.

In summary, this study makes four recommendations:

1. The current spiritual fathering metaphor should be replaced by the spiritual parenting metaphor.
2. Spiritual parenting should be an inclusivist metaphor that empowers both men and women.
3. Spiritual parenting should be an inclusivist metaphor that acknowledges the role of women pastors and women church founders.
4. This inclusivist model should bring a balance to the relationship between spiritual children and spiritual fathers.

Conclusion

The article studied spiritual fathering and its role in popular religion. The concept of the pastor as a spiritual father is common among Africans within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in different settings such as Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, and Zimbabwe. However, the concept of spiritual fathering is beset with challenges such as GBV, exclusion of women pastors and women church founders, and various imbalances in the spiritual father–child relationship. Some spiritual fathers use the concept of spiritual fathering to perpetuate GBV and other abuses. Women pastors and women church founders are not recognized in the current use of the metaphor of spiritual fathering. Some spiritual fathers only want to receive benefits from their spiritual children without returning the favor.

Given these challenges of spiritual fathering within Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, a comprehensive and inclusive metaphor is recommended to scholars in theology, religious studies, and gender studies for further research. The new metaphor is conceptualized as “spiritual parenting” instead of spiritual fathering. Spiritual parenting is an inclusivist model that empowers both men and women with the potential to reduce cases of GBV and other abuse. Spiritual parenting is gender inclusive with the potential of recognizing women pastors and women church founders. This inclusivist model moves away from spiritual sonship to spiritual childhood that recognizes both spiritual sons and daughters.

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