

Helping Our Children Learn to Function in the Body

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 12**

By

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Growing Godly Families Series

The “Growing Godly Families Series” is the result of weekly topics were prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders; to give them Biblical principles for the development of additional godly spiritual leaders. Because they give Biblical principles for growth in spiritual leadership, they are also helpful for Christians that want to grow and become godly spiritual leaders.

Mark 10:43-45 says, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” In these verses, Christ taught that godly spiritual leaders do not have the attitudes of leaders in the world. Worldly leadership is based on power and authority and is designed to benefit the leader and place him above others. In contrast, godly spiritual leadership is designed to help every Christian reach their full potential in Christ. The following three statements give a summary of three styles of leadership.

If we drive people, we will drive them until they can get out of our way.

If we lead people, we will be able to lead them as far as we have gone ourselves.

If we serve people, we will help each person develop their full God-given potential and equip each person for the ministry that Christ has prepared for every Christian.

In the world, people often measure success by the amount of things that they accumulate before they die. However, they are unable to take any of those things with them when they die. Mark 8:36-37 says, “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” Success produces rewards until we die, but it produces nothing for eternity.

In contrast, God measures effectiveness by our faithfulness and obedience. Matthew 6:19-21 says, “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Effectiveness produces eternal rewards. Mark 10:29-30 says, “So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time--houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.” 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The Growing Godly Families Series is designed to make your life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Learning When God Chose Us to Be His Children

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics that will discuss how we can help our physical and spiritual children learn to function effectively in the body of Christ, the church. This series of topics will also focus on how to help them learn to understand and apply the book of Ephesians to their own lives. In this topic we will be focusing on the topic of learning when God chose us to be His children.

Ephesians 1:1-2 says, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we see that Paul is called an apostle of Jesus Christ. In Luke 6:13 we read, “And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.” Here we see that Christ personally chose the original twelve apostles. In Acts 1:21-22 we see that the apostles were to be official witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. Those verses say, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” These men were called to be official witnesses of the resurrection.

However, Acts 9:15-16 also tells us that the Lord chose Paul to be a witness of the resurrection right after Paul saw the Lord on the road to Damascus. In those verses Ananias was told to go and speak to Saul (later changed to Paul), “But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.” Here we see that Paul is called a chosen vessel. We see that God verified the fact that Paul was an apostle in the same way that He verified the ministry of the other apostles. 2 Corinthians 12:12 says, “Truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you with all perseverance, in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.” As a result, we see here that Paul was called by the will of God to be an apostle.

We also have a description of the people to whom the book of Ephesians was originally written. It was originally written to the saints who were in Ephesus. We want to help our children understand that at the moment we repent and place our faith in Christ that we are also called saints. A saint is a person that has been set apart from sin and made holy in the sight of God. This happens to each one of us at the moment that we repent and place our faith in Christ. Peter told the people in Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.” The word “repent” means to turn from our past or to turn from our sin. The word “converted” means to turn back to God. At the moment that we repent of our sin of unbelief, all of our sins, past, present and future, are blotted out and we are made holy in the sight of God. As a result, we have received the grace of God and are now able to experience the peace that comes from both the Father and from Christ.

That is why Ephesians 1:3-4 goes on to say, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” Here we see that we want to bless God and express our praise to Him because of the fact that He has already blessed us with every spiritual blessing. James 1:17 says, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.” Here we see that God has worked in our lives so that at the moment of salvation we received every spiritual blessing.

The blessings in these verses and other verses came to our lives from the heavenly places where God has His throne.

The first blessing that we received was the fact that God chose us before the foundation of the world. Here we see that God chose us for Himself before He ever created the world. As a part of that choice, God included the complete process including our presence with Him in heaven. Romans 8:28-30 says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." God determined before the foundation of the world that we would become like Christ and be with God forever.

The second blessing that we received is that God chose us to be holy and without blame before Him. In order to make us holy and without blame before Him, God determined how our sin would be removed and we would be made righteous. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Christ is the One who is righteous and without sin. As a result, the Father determined that our sin would be placed on Christ and that He would become sin for us as He hung on the cross. As a result of the fact that Christ became sin for us, at the moment that we repented and placed our faith in Christ, the Father chose to place the righteousness of Christ on us at that very moment. That is why we are now holy and without blame in the sight of God. We are able to stand before God because we stand in the righteousness of Christ and not in our own righteousness.

We go on to see some additional blessings that we received in Ephesians 1:5-6 where we read, "Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved." The third blessing that we received is that God predestinated us to adoption as sons or children. The word translated "predestinated" means to determine in advance. Here we see that God determined before He ever created the world to adopt us as His children. John 1:12-13 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Here we see that at the moment of salvation that we became the children of God and God adopted us into His family.

The fourth blessing that we received is that God adopted us to Himself by Christ Jesus. This blessing is really wonderful when we understand it. 2 Peter 1:3-4 says, "As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption *that is* in the world through lust." In addition to adopting us into His family by Christ, we also see that God determined before the foundation of the world to give us the divine nature as a part of that adoption. As a result, at the moment of salvation every Christian receives a new nature or divine nature that gives us a desire to do those things that are pleasing to God. That is why every new Christian immediately has a desire to do the things that please God.

The fifth blessing that we received is that God did this according to the good pleasure of His will. Here we see that God adopted us into His family because that was His will. In Ephesians 1:11 it says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will." We are reminded that God does all that He does because that is His will.

The sixth blessing that we received is the fact that God chose us to the praise of the glory of His grace. Philippians 2:13 says, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure." Here we see that we were chosen to bring glory to God because He chose to demonstrate His grace in our lives. Grace means that we did nothing to deserve salvation. Instead God chose to show His great kindness to each of us by choosing us to share in eternal life.

The seventh blessing that we received is the fact that God made us accepted in the Beloved. In Matthew 3:17 the Father spoke from heaven, "And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In this verse, we see that the Father called Christ His Beloved Son. We are accepted by God because of the fact that we are in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Christ is the Beloved. Because we are in Christ, the Father has made us a new creation and the Father sees us just as He sees His Beloved.

This acceptance is explained in Ephesians 1:7 where we read, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." The word "redemption" means to be bought back from sin, to be removed from further sale and to be set free from sin. The Father accepted the payment of the blood of Christ as the payment for our sin. At that moment the Father also forgave our sins. To forgive means to let go. The Father let go of our sins, removed them as far as the east is from the west, buried them in the depths of the sea, blotted them out and remembers them no more. God did that for each one of us who have repented of our sin and placed our faith in Christ because of the riches of His grace. We want to help both our physical and spiritual children understand when God chose us to be His children. We also want to help them understand the greatness of the riches of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand when God chose us to be His children.

Learning What Is Meant by the Sealing of the Spirit

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand when God chose us to be His children. We saw that in addition to choosing us to be His children before He even created the world that the Father also blessed us with all spiritual blessings. As we help our children grow in the understanding of those blessings, it helps both we and our children to come to a greater understanding of the greatness of the grace and love of Christ. Today, we want to see how to help our children learn to understand what it means for us to be sealed by the Holy Spirit.

We concluded our last topic by seeing that we have received the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. As we start this topic, in Ephesians 1:8-10 we read, “Which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him.” Here we see that God made the riches of His grace to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. The word that is translated “wisdom” in this verse speaks of the perfect knowledge and wisdom that belongs to God. In Colossians 1:9 Paul prayed, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.” In this verse in Colossians Paul prayed that Christians would come to knowledge of the will of God through the wisdom of God. Here we see that God wants us to understand the wisdom that made it possible for us to receive forgiveness of sins.

The word that is translated “prudence” is used only one other time in the New Testament. In Luke 1:17 while talking to Zacharias about the ministry that John the Baptist would have the angel told Zacharias, “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” In this verse in Luke the word is translated wisdom. This word means God given spiritual understanding of the will of God. As a result, we see that God has designed us as Christians to fully understand the will of God that makes forgiveness a reality in our lives. This is very important in the daily lives of our children because only as they and we know that we are forgiven can we experience real inner peace moment by moment.

God has made known to us the mystery of his will in His Word. However, Christians can only understand that will as they get to know the Word of God. Paul used this same word when he said in Ephesians 3:3-4, “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ).” We are reminded that the Lord used Paul and the other New Testament writers to give us the wisdom that we need about the things of the Lord. The Lord did this according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself.

We also see that God is going to complete His plan for all believers. The word that is translated “dispensation” means management or stewardship. Here we see that God is so managing the affairs of the world that He has set the time when history will be complete and He will gather together in one all things in Christ. This will happen both in heaven and on the earth. In Revelation 20:1-6 we see that Christ will bind Satan and rule all believers on the earth for a thousand years. Then in Revelation 20:11-21:1 we see that God will create a new heavens and a new earth and as believers we will live with Christ for all eternity.

Ephesians 1:11-12 says, “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” It is in Christ that we as Christians have received eternal life. In Romans 8:16-17 we read, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Here we see that our eternal inheritance makes us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. We will share all of the riches of glory forever.

The word that is translated “predestinated” means to determine in advance. Ephesians 1:5 says, “Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” We see that God determined before the creation of the world to adopt us as His children and make our salvation certain before He created the world. The word that is translated “works” means energy and speaks of the fact that God has the energy to complete what He plans. Philippians 2:13 says, “For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” Here we see God also determined that He would carry out His purpose to bring His plan to completion.

We see that the reason that God determined these things before the creation of the world was to carry out the purpose that He had planned for the life of each person who places their faith in Christ. It is the will or purpose of God that we would become conformed to the image of Christ. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.” To carry out that purpose God adopted us as His children through Christ.

In verse 12 we see that God did this so that we could be to the praise of His glory. Here we see that it brings glory to God to change and transform us so that we are in the image of Christ. That is why Romans 8:30 goes on to say, “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.” Here we are reminded that when God predestinated us that He determined not only to save us but also to glorify us. The fact that God completes this whole process in our lives also brings glory to God because of the fact that He is the One who is over all things.

Ephesians 1:13-14 goes on to say, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” In order to make it possible for us to trust in Christ, God made certain that two things happened in our lives. First, God made certain that we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” True faith comes in response to hearing the Word of God. That is why it is so important that we share the Word of God with others and not just our own words.

Second, God made certain that we would hear the Word of God which makes it possible for us to believe. Acts 16:31 says, “So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” The word “believe” means to be convinced that something is true with the result that we place our trust in the thing that we believe. Here we see that we place our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and receive salvation.

However, we also see that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise at the moment that we believe. A seal is an official mark of identification. Throughout history governments have

placed a seal on something to make it official. The seal shows ownership, authority, security or is a sign that something is genuine or authentic. When John the Baptist was going before Christ to prepare the way for Christ he said in Matthew 3:11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Christ baptized us with the Holy Spirit at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 we read, "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." In this verse, we see that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation. In 1 John 4:4 we read, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." Here we see that the Holy Spirit who is in us is greater than Satan who is in the world. As a result, the sealing of the Holy Spirit points to the fact that we belong to God and are secure from Satan.

We also see that God sealed us to the praise of His glory. This phrase is repeated both in verse 12 and verse 14. Then Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." In each of these verses we are reminded that God is the One who deserves all of the glory. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God has worked in their lives and sealed them so that they no longer need to be fearful or afraid. Satan cannot destroy them because they have been sealed by God. As a result, they are safe and secure in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that they have been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

3.

Learning How to Pray for Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that they are sealed by the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of their salvation. We also saw that the fact that they are sealed means that they are safe and secure and that Satan cannot destroy them because they are sealed by the Holy Spirit. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to pray for others as we look at the example of how Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus.

In Ephesians 1:15-16 we read, “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.” Here we see that Paul prayed continually for the Christians in the city of Ephesus and the surrounding area. In fact in every letter that Paul wrote to a group of Christians in a particular area he spoke about the fact that he continued to pray for them. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn from our example as we regularly pray for Christians in other areas.

In this case we see that Paul thanked God for their faith and love. In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4 we read, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” In these verses, we see that Paul thanked God for the faith, love and hope of the Christians in Thessalonica. If one or more of these things was lacking in a church, Paul would pray that it would develop. That is because we are told in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” Here we see that these three things abide and so Paul either thanked the Lord when he heard these things were present in a church or he prayed that they would develop in that church.

In 2 Corinthians 5:7 we read, “For we walk by faith, not by sight.” We are not in heaven yet and so we must walk by faith as we live on this earth. Hope is based on the resurrection and the return of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Then Titus 2:13 adds, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Both of these are extremely important in the life of every Christian. However, both will be complete when we get to heaven. In contrast, love is the most important because it is eternal. That is why Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We want to help our children learn to thank God by showing them the importance of thanking God for the faith, hope and love that they see in others.

After thanking God for the Ephesian Christians, Paul went on to pray that God would do some particular things in the lives of the Ephesians. Ephesians 1:17-19 says, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.” We see that Paul prayed that God would develop certain things in the life of each Christian.

Paul prayed that God would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him (Christ). The word that is translated “wisdom” speaks of the perfect knowledge and wisdom that belongs to God. Colossians 3:16 says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” This verse makes it clear that God wants us to grow in His wisdom so that we can share with others the wisdom that belongs to God. The word translated “revelation” means that the things that we have not known in the past have now been revealed to us. Romans 16:25 says, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began.” God used Paul and the other writers of the New Testament to reveal Christ to us.

Paul prayed that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened. Many people have knowledge of the Word of God but they lack understanding. In fact the person that is not a Christian cannot have spiritual understanding. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” That is why we need the Holy Spirit to give us light so that we can understand the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” We want to help our children develop understanding and not just knowledge. With understanding it is then possible for them to apply the Word of God to the various situations that they face in their daily lives.

We see that Paul wanted the Ephesian Christians to have understanding so that they could understand some specific things. First, he wanted them to be able to understand the hope of His calling. 2 Timothy 1:9 says, “Who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.” Because of the fact that Christ has called us, we can look forward to His coming with confident assurance.

Second, he wanted them to understand the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. 1 Peter 1:4 says, “To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you.” Here we see that we can look forward to an inheritance that will be eternal.

Third, he wanted them to understand the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. This power was given to us at the moment of salvation but Paul prayed that the Christians would understand and use that power. Ephesians 3:20 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” The Lord is able to do far more than we could ever imagine through our lives as we learn to walk in the Spirit.

Ephesians 1:20-23 goes on to say, “Which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated *Him* at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all *things* to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” God caused each of these things to become certain when He raised Christ from the dead.

In addition to raising Christ from the dead, the Father also seated Christ at His right hand. Romans 8:34 says, “Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also

risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.” We want to help our children understand that when they pray that Christ is also sitting at the right hand of the Father where He is speaking to the Father for them. We see that the place where Christ is seated is far above all principality and power and might and dominion. This reminds us of the fact that Christ is greater than any power or authority because He is the One who has all power and authority. Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” He is the One who is over all. Christ is also above every name that is named both in this age and in the age to come. This is a reminder that the Father has placed Christ over all things both now and for all eternity.

We also see that the Father has placed all things under the feet of Christ and made Him the head. Philippians 2:10-11 says, “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Then Colossians 1:17-18 says, “And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” Christ is the Head because He is both the Creator who was in the beginning and also the first to defeat death when He rose from the dead.

Christ is the Head of the church which is His body. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” He is the One who supplies all that we need and also the One who fills all things. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray for others, we also want to help them fully understand that they are praying to the One who have authority over all things. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to pray for others.

4.

Learning How Christ Made Us Alive

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray for others. We also saw that we want to help them understand that they are praying to the One who has all authority and is able to answer their prayers as He chooses. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children understand more fully what Christ did for them when He gave them spiritual life.

Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Here we see that we want to help our children understand that before they placed their faith in Christ that although they had physical life that they were spiritually dead. God told Adam and Eve in Genesis 2:16-17, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” Here we see that God said that the very day that they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that they would die.

In Genesis 3:6 we see that Adam and Eve sinned. Genesis 3:7-8 tells what happened immediately, “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden.” Here we see that they experienced immediate spiritual death. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the spirit. Spiritual death is separation of man from God. As soon as Adam and Eve sinned they realized that they were separated from God and tried to cover themselves. When that did not work, they hid themselves. They also immediately experienced other consequences of sin including fear, guilt and shame and then they began to blame.

Here in Ephesians 2:1 we see that God reverses the first effect of original sin at the moment that we repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in Christ. We are made alive spiritually because we are no longer dead in our trespasses and sins. Adam and Eve passed their sin nature on to all of their descendents except Christ. As you remember, the angel told Mary that the Holy Spirit would come upon her. As a result, Christ had a divine nature instead of a sin nature. At the moment of salvation Christ makes us alive and also gives us a new nature. That is why every true believer has a desire to do what is right and pleasing in the sight of God. New believers need help to come to understand that the only way they can carry out those new desires is as they yield to the Holy Spirit moment by moment so that they have the power to carry out those new desires.

Ephesians 2:2-3 goes on to tell us how we walked before we received that new nature. Those verses say, “In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” When we were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sins we walked according to the course of this world. The phrase “the course of this world” speaks of the world system that is controlled by Satan and is opposed to God and His Word as well as all those who choose to place their faith in Christ. That is why to walk according to the course of this world also means that we walk according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan).

We also see how we all lived and acted when we were following Satan and the actions of the

world around us. We see that Satan is also called the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. This is a reminder that Satan was a spirit or angel until the time when pride took control of him and he led one third of the angels to rebel against God and become evil spirits or demons. Satan is the one who blinds people to spiritual truth. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says, “Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” Before we placed our faith in Christ each one of us was following Satan and we were the sons of disobedience.

When we were the sons of disobedience we see that we all conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh. This means that our actions showed that we were living to satisfy the sinful desires of our flesh. 1 John 2:16 says, “For all that *is* in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” This verse tells us that we chose to satisfy the sinful desires of our flesh. We also chose to satisfy the sinful desires of our eyes. We were also controlled by the sin of pride.

We see that in addition to walking in these sins that we also were fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The word translated “desires” means what we wish or what we have determined will be done. Here we see that our actions were determined by our thoughts. James 1:14-15 says, “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.” Before we placed our faith in Christ we were controlled by our sin nature that was filled with evil desires. The word “entice” means to catch by bait. Satan always tries to make sin look attractive because that is his bait to deceive us. Once desire has taken control of our mind the sin has already happened in our mind. Then it is carried out by our actions. However, the final result of that sin is not the pleasure that Satan used to deceive us. Instead the final result is death.

That is why we were called the children of wrath. Following a list of sins in the earlier verses, Ephesians 5:6 says, “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.” Every person who has not repented of the sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ is still a child of wrath. John 16:11 says, “Of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Satan had already been judged and those who continue to follow him will also share in his eternal judgment. Revelation 20:15 says, “And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.” Those who continue to be children of wrath will share this judgment with Satan for all eternity.

We can be very thankful that Ephesians 2:4-7 goes on to say, “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Here we see that God is rich in mercy. Mercy means that God has provided salvation by Christ and offers that salvation to people as a free gift. Here we see that God showed His riches by offering that mercy to all who will come to him by repenting of their sin of unbelief and coming to God through Christ. The mercy of God shows the greatness of the love that God has for us.

We see that God chose to show that love while we were dead in trespasses and sins. Romans 6:4-7 says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.” Here we see that God chose to do away with the body of sin

that we had in our lives when we were dead in our trespasses and sins. To do that God saved us by His grace. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” We have been set free from the bondage of sin by the grace of God.

In addition, we also see that God has raised us up from spiritual death to spiritual life. The verses that we just quoted from Romans 6 shows us that is why it is possible for us to walk in newness of life. However, this spiritual life does much more than just make it possible for us to walk in newness of life. Here we see that it also means that in the sight of God we are also now sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Although we are not with Christ in heavenly places yet since we are still here on this earth, God has made that future so certain that He already views us as being in the heavenly places with Christ.

We can also look forward to that day when we will be with Christ in the heavenly places for all eternity. The Father is eager for that day because He wants to show us the exceeding riches of His grace. The Father also wants us to fully understand that this kindness has been provided for us through the kindness of Christ that caused Him to go to the cross and have all of our sins placed on Him. 1 Peter 2:24 says, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Here we see that it was the kindness of Christ that gave us spiritual life and made it possible for us to be healed and set free from the penalty of sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand clearly how Christ made us alive when we were dead in trespasses and sins. That will help them to grow in their understanding of the peace of God that passes all understanding and keeps our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand how Christ gave us spiritual life.

5.

Learning How God Worked in Us

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be made spiritually alive. We saw that when Adam and Eve sinned that they experienced immediate spiritual death because spiritual death is separation from God. We saw that at the moment of salvation that God gave us spiritual life and we are now able to enjoy fellowship with God again. Today, we are going to see how this spiritual life has made it possible for us to now carry out the things that God has designed for us to do to give our lives purpose and meaning.

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." It was the mercy and grace of God that made it possible for us to receive salvation so that we received spiritual life. We see here that we received that grace through faith. However, God wants us to clearly understand that the faith that we have is not the result of our own efforts. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Here we see that the first thing that God did to give us faith is to make it possible for us to hear the Word of God.

In addition to making it possible for us to hear the Word of God, Christ said in John 6:44, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day." Here we see that the Father is also the one who draws each person that comes to Christ for salvation. Then Romans 8:30 says, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." Here we see why God made it possible for us to hear the Word of God and then drew us to Christ. God did these things because He had chosen us before He ever created the world. As a result, our salvation from beginning to end is a gift that is given to us by God.

Our works have nothing to do with this salvation. Verse 9 points out if there is anything that we could do to in any way make our salvation possible that we would boast. That is why Isaiah 64:6 says, "But we are all like an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The word that is translated "filthy rags" speaks of the bandages that were used to cover the sores of lepers. As a result, any works that we would do to try and earn our salvation would be completely useless.

Instead we see that we are His workmanship. The word that is translated "workmanship" means the works of God as the Creator. God created us and chose us to be His children. Here we see what God created us to do. He created us to do good works. Matthew 5:16 says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." The word that is translated "good" means that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen." Here we see that God has worked through Christ to make us complete for every good work.

In 2 Timothy 2:20-21 tells us, "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses

himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” If we will cleanse our lives from the things that bring dishonor, the Lord will use our lives in ways beyond what we can image because He has already prepared us for every good work. Then God tells us how He equips us for every good work in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 where we read, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Here we see that God wants us to become familiar with the whole Word of God so that we are thoroughly equipped for every good work.

We also want to encourage our children to pray for other Christians that the Lord will cause the works of others to be fruitful. Paul gives us the illustration of such a prayer when he says in Colossians 1:9-10, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” As we help our children to become thoroughly equipped for every good work, a part of those good works is praying for others that the Lord will also equip them for good works.

We saw in an earlier topic that God chose us to salvation before He even brought the creation into existence. Here in Ephesians 2:10 we also see that God created us for good works before the creation. This is a great reminder that God has created every Christian for a purpose. It is a wonderful thing to know that God has created us in such a way that our lives can have great meaning and purpose as we learn to carry out the good works for which God has equipped us.

Paul goes on in Ephesians 2:11-13 to remind us, “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands--that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” During that time the Jews felt that the Gentiles had no part in the promises of God and rejected the Gentiles. Since most of us are Gentiles, Paul wanted to remind us how separated we were from God before we came to God through Christ.

First, we see that at that time we were without Christ. The word Christ means the Anointed One. Because of the promises that God gave to Abraham, throughout most of the Old Testament at least some of the Jews were looking for the coming of One who would be their Savior. The Gentiles did not know the Word of God and could not look forward to a Savior. In contrast Paul wrote in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Christ came as a Savior for both the Jews and the Gentiles.

Second, we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. As aliens we were not a part of the nation of Israel and could not enjoy the blessings that God had promised to Israel. The only other time the word translated commonwealth is used in the New Testament is in Acts 22:28 where we read, “The commander answered, “With a large sum I obtained this citizenship.” And Paul said, “But I was born *a citizen*.” Here the word is translated citizenship. At the moment of salvation we became a citizen of heaven with all of the blessings that we have seen in the first chapter of Ephesians.

Third, we were strangers from the covenants of promise. The word that is translated “covenants” is the word that is also translated testament. In 1 Corinthians 11:25 we read, “In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My

blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” Christ came to make a New Covenant with His blood. This covenant is for all who come to Him by faith. We quoted Hebrews 13:20-21 in an earlier paragraph. In those verses we see that the blood of Christ made us complete because it was an everlasting covenant.

Fourth, we had no hope. We were without hope because God had given us as Gentiles no promise. We saw in an earlier topic that true hope for us is based on the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ. Hope is the confident assurance that God will do exactly as He as promised. Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” We can now look forward to the coming of Christ because we know that we have been given eternal life and that the day will come when Christ will return to take us to heaven.

Fifth, we were without God in the world. Because the Gentiles did not know God, Ephesians 2:2 says, “In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” We did not know God and so we walked in darkness and did not know where we were going.

In contrast, to the five things above, we see that at the moment that we placed our faith in Christ Jesus that we were brought near by the blood of Christ. John 1:29 says, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” When John the Baptist introduced Christ he pointed out that Christ came to take away the sin of the world and not just the sin of the Jews. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand how God has worked in our lives as Gentiles, they will grow in their understanding of the great blessings that we have received through Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand how God has worked in our lives.

Learning How the Lord Is Building His Church

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how God has worked in our lives. We saw that God planned even before the creation to create us for good works. It is only possible to do those good works after we have placed our faith in Christ because the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to carry out good works. In our topic today, we are going to see how the Lord is building His church so that it includes both Jews and Gentiles.

In Ephesians 2:14-16 we read, “For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” We see in these verses that it is Christ Himself who is our peace. In the temple courtyard in Jerusalem the Jews had a wall that divided the courtyard into two parts. One part was called the court of the Gentiles. The other part the Gentiles were not allowed to enter. As a result, this was a wall of separation that separated the Jews and the Gentiles.

Here we see that Christ is the One who broke down the wall that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. In the church we have become one whether we are Jews or Gentiles. The early church asked the Holy Spirit for guidance about whether Gentiles had to follow the ceremonial laws of the Jews when they became Christians. After much prayer and discussion the leaders of the church in Jerusalem wrote to the Gentiles in Acts 15:28-29, “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” These four things came from the first nine chapters of Genesis so are universal principles that applied to all people and had nothing to do with the Jewish law.

Through His death on the cross Christ removed this barrier that had separated the Gentiles from the Jews from the time that the Law was given to Moses. By His death Christ made Jews and Gentiles one new man in the body of Christ, the church. The word that is translated “new” speaks of something that is new in kind because there has never been anything like it before. This word is used in 2 Corinthians 5:17 where we read, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We are new creations as Christians because we are made something that we could never be before Christ came into our lives. The same word is also used in Ephesians 4:24 where we are told, “And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” Christ gave us a new nature which we could not have without Christ.

As a result, we now have peace with God and with one another. We also see that when we place our faith in Christ that whether we are Jews or Gentiles that we are reconciled to God and made one body. Christ has made us one through the cross. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, “Now all things *are* of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” The word “reconcile” means to bring back to a former state of harmony. Once we were separated from God and each other by sin. Now we are brought back into harmony through the blood of Christ. Christ put to death the cause of enmity or hatred when He defeated sin. That is why we

can be one.

We go on to read in Ephesians 2:17-18, “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” Christ came to this earth both to announce this peace and to make this peace possible by His death and resurrection. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Christ explained to His disciples that this message of peace was for all people. Christ said in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Then He said in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Christ wants us to take this message of peace to the end of the earth.

The result of this message of peace is that whether we are Jews or Gentiles we both have the same access to the Father. This access to the Father is by the Holy Spirit who is placed in our lives at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:14-17 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.” Every Christian is a child of God and has access to the Father by the Holy Spirit.

Because we have this free access to the Father, Ephesians 2:19-22 says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Here we see that as Christians that we are no longer strangers and foreigners to one another once we become Christians. Instead three different words are used to describe our relationship. First we are fellow citizens because Philippians 3:20 says that our citizenship is in heaven. Second we become fellow saints with those who are already saints. Third, we become members of the household of God. We are one family.

We see that this spiritual family is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. In Acts 1:21-22 we read, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Here we see that the apostles are part of our foundation because they gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Then 2 Peter 1:19-21 says, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” Here we see that the prophets gave us the written Word of God. That is why the apostles and prophets are called the foundation.

However, the most important part of the foundation is the chief cornerstone because everything is measured from that cornerstone. That is why Christ is called the chief cornerstone. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is 1 Peter 2:5-6 where we read, “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious, and he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” This verse is quoted from Psalm 118:22-23 where we read, “The

stone *which* the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes.” Christ is the chief cornerstone by which we must measure our lives.

It is important to understand that Christ is the standard by which He is building the church. He is the One who holds us as Jews and Gentiles closely together and makes us one in the church. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 we read, “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” Here we are reminded that all true believers both Jews and Gentiles are the temple of God and that God is living both with us and within us. All true believers become a part of the building which the Lord is building as He builds the church.

We also see why it is the plan of God to build us together as Jews and Gentiles. We see that God has built us together as a permanent dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 we read, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” As Christians every one of us has the Holy Spirit living within our lives. The temple in the Old Testament and during the time of Christ was a temporary building which was eventually destroyed. However, we see here that our bodies as Christians are the permanent temple of the Holy Spirit. That means that everywhere we go as Christians that the temple of God is present.

We want to help both our physical and spiritual children understand that the Lord is building His church and that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit whether we are Jews or Gentiles. That is why we want to show them by our own example the importance of modeling Christ in both our body and in our spirit by the lives that we live so that others can see Christ in us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how the Lord is building His church in their lives.

Learning How God Makes Us Equal in the Body of Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how the Lord is building His church. We saw that He is building His church in our lives because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. This is true whether we are Jews or Gentiles. As a result, everywhere that we go as Christians the temple of the Holy Spirit is present because we are that temple. In our topic today, we are going to learn how God makes each of us equal in the body of Christ. This means that no Christian is any greater than any other Christian.

In Ephesians 3:1-5 we read, “For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles--if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” In these verses, we see that God revealed to Paul as well as the other apostles and prophets a mystery that had not previously been known. We will see that this is an extremely important mystery to help our children understand.

Paul had just pointed out in the verses in chapter two as we saw in the previous topic that the Jews and Gentiles had been made one because Christ had broken down the wall of separation that had previously divided the Jews and the Gentiles. That is the reason why Paul is going to make known this mystery that God has revealed to Paul and the other apostles and prophets. Paul begins this explanation by saying that He is the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the Gentiles. Paul had spent two years in prison in Caesarea and now had been a prisoner in Rome for almost two more years as he wrote this letter. We see in the last part of Acts chapter 21 through the end of Acts 28 that this imprisonment was due to the fact that Paul had been faithful in preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. As a result, Paul did not consider himself a prisoner of any man. Instead he said that he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus because Christ had allowed his imprisonment to carry out the will of God.

This ministry to the Gentiles had been given to Paul by God when God first called Him. As God sent Ananias to Paul in Acts 9:15, God told Ananias, “But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” Paul said that he was given this ministry to the Gentiles by the grace of God. In order to carry out this ministry God had given him direct revelation of the mystery of how Christ had made the Jews and Gentiles one in the church. In Galatians 1:15-17 Paul told where he received that revelation when we read, “But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called *me* through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.” Here we see that Christ gave Paul special instruction of the mystery of Christ so that he was equipped to go to the Gentiles.

This mystery had not been revealed in the Old Testament. In fact it was not even revealed through men. Instead we see that this mystery was revealed to Paul and the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit. That mystery is summarized in Ephesians 3:6-7 where we read, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.” Here we are reminded that the first

part of the mystery of the church is the fact that Jews and Gentiles have become fellow heirs. The word translated “fellow heirs” means those who have become joint participants. Jews and Gentiles who have become Christians are joint participants in the body of Christ and neither is more important than the other.

These verses also show that the Gentiles are of the same body. 1 Corinthians 12:27 says, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” As Christians we are all part of the body of Christ whether we are Jews or Gentiles. As a result, we have also been made partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel. Here we see that as Gentiles we share with the Jews the promise of salvation that God made available in Christ. This means that each one of us as Gentiles who has become a Christian will be a part of the kingdom of God.

God had called Paul to take the message of salvation to the Gentiles and he was thankful to God as he carried out this ministry. Paul had been given this ministry by the grace of God. Paul said when he spoke before Agrippa about his salvation in Acts 26:15-18, “So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Paul had been faithful in taking this message to the Gentiles. Paul realized that it was God who gave him the power to carry out this ministry.

Ephesians 3:8-12 goes on to say, “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.” Paul said that God had given him this ministry even though he was the least of all the saints. He felt that he was the least of the saints because he had formerly persecuted the church.

Paul thanked God that God had shown His grace by giving Paul the opportunity to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles. In Colossians 1:27-28 we read, “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” Paul loved to preach the riches of Christ so that he could present every person mature in Christ Jesus. Paul also wanted the Ephesians and all Christians to understand the fellowship of the mystery. As we saw in chapter two this fellowship is the result of the fact that Jews and Gentiles are made one in Christ in the church. This mystery was hidden throughout the Old Testament but was revealed through Christ.

The reason why this mystery was revealed was so that the church could understand the greatness of the variety of the wisdom of God. Romans 11:33 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable *are* His judgments and His ways past finding out!” The planning of God for the church from eternity is one of the ways that God reveals the greatness of His wisdom. Not only was this great wisdom unknown to mankind, it was also unknown by the angels including both the faithful angels and the fallen angels who had followed Satan in his rebellion against God. As a result, even Satan knew nothing of the church until Christ brought the church into existence. However, it was the plan of God from

eternity so that He could show this part of His wisdom at the time that He brought the church into existence.

The church was part of the eternal purpose of God. God had planned to make Jews and Gentiles one by bringing the church into existence once Christ had paid the penalty for sin. Romans 15:5-7 says, "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Whether we are strong or weak Christians or Jews and Gentiles we are made one in the church. This causes the angels to glorify God for the way that He has brought this unity between Jews and Gentiles.

In addition to bringing glory to God, we also see that as both Jews and Gentiles we now have boldness and access to God through Christ. Hebrews 4:16 tells us that the Jews have boldness to come to God through Christ. That verse says, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Here we see that the Jews have boldness and access to come to God. Then Romans 5:1-2 says, "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here we see that the Gentiles have boldness and access to come to God. As Jews and Gentiles we all have this confidence through faith.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that as Jews and Gentiles we are equal in the body of Christ. We also want to help them understand that we all have boldness and access to God through Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that we are all equal in the body of Christ.

Learning Why God Does More Than We Can Imagine

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that God has made all of us equal in the body of Christ. That is true whether we are strong or weak. It is true whether we are Jews or Gentiles. God kept this plan a secret so that it was a mystery until He revealed His plan for the church through Christ. As a result, even the angels were able to give glory to God for the way that He has chosen to bring the Jews and Gentiles together and make them one in Christ. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul prayed that the Ephesians would understand why God is able to do more in their lives and in the lives of all Christians than we can ever imagine.

Paul had told the Ephesians how the Lord had allowed him to suffer and also spend at least four years in prison in order to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. However, he did not want them to become discouraged because of his suffering. Ephesians 3:13 says, “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Paul realized and understood that the Lord had used his sufferings to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles and so he wanted them to give glory to God for what He had done.

Paul also wanted the Ephesian Christians to know that he prayed for them. In Ephesians 3:14-15 we read the introduction to this prayer when those verses say, “For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.” Paul had last talked to the leaders in Ephesus more than four years earlier as recorded in Acts 20:17-38. He had just spent almost four years in prison for sharing the Gospel with the Gentiles at the time that he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. However, Paul did not waste this time. He used these years in prison to pray for the churches that he had established in the region stretching from Jerusalem almost to Rome. Acts 28:30-31 says he now was sharing the Gospel with all who came to him. His prayer was to God because He is the One who gives life to all who believe.

As Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus we see that he prayed for five things for these Christians. These are also five key things for us to include as we pray for our physical and spiritual children. Ephesians 3:16-19 says that Paul prayed to God, “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Here we see that the focus of his prayer was their spiritual development.

First, Paul prayed that they would be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man. Christ told the disciples in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” As Christians today, we now receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation. At each moment that we are yielding to (filled with) the Holy Spirit, we have the power to obey the Word of God. Evidence that we are being strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit is that we will speak the Word of God with boldness. Acts 4:8a and 4:13 say, “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” The more we learn to yield, the more we will speak the Word of God with boldness.

Second, Paul prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith. Christ told the disciples in John 14:23, “Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” In this verse, we see that Christ promised that in addition to sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in the lives of all Christians that the disciples would also be assured that the Father and Christ were also dwelling in their lives as they loved Christ and were obedient to Him. Although the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in the life of every Christian, a Christian may not experience the peace that comes from their presence if that Christian is not loving Christ and obeying Him. As a result, Paul prayed that they might experience that presence through faith.

Third, Paul prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in love. There are two negative roots mentioned in the New Testament. Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” Then 1 Timothy 6:10 says, “For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of evil*, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” A root of bitterness will defile many and a root of the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. The other positive root is mentioned in Colossians 2:7 where we read, “Rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” The word translated “rooted” means to strengthen or establish. We need to follow the example of Paul and pray that our physical and spiritual children will be established and strengthened in the love of Christ.

Fourth, Paul prayed that they would be able to comprehend or understand four dimensions of the love of Christ which passes knowledge. Paul told the Romans in Romans 5:5, “Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” Then Paul told the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 4:19, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” In these verses, we see that first the love of God is poured out in our hearts. Then God teaches us how to love one another with that love. A very large tree has four dimensions. We can see the length and width of the tree. We can also see the height of the tree. However, we cannot see the depth of the tree because the roots are underground. That is why it is important to understand all four dimensions of the love of Christ. The Father pours out His love in our hearts where that love is unseen. Then that is what makes it possible for God to teach us how to love one another with a love than can be seen.

Fifth, Paul prayed that they would be filled with all of the fullness of God. The same word for filled is used in Ephesians 5:18 where we read, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” Since we saw that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all dwell in our lives and that we experience His presence as we love God and are obedient to Him, we see here that Paul prayed that we would be filled with all the fullness of God. We are either self centered or God centered. As we confess our sins and yield our selfish desires to God, we empty our human spirit of self which makes it possible for our human spirit to be filled with all of the fullness of God. Here we see that Paul prayed that this would become a pattern of life for the Ephesians and not just an occasional event. In the same way we want to be an example to our children of what it means to empty our human spirit of self so that more and more of the time we are also filled with all of the fullness of God as we pray for that to happen in their lives.

After praying these five things for the Ephesian Christians, Paul reminded them of what the Lord was able to do as they allowed the prayer of Paul to be answered in their lives. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” The word that is translated “who is able” means to have the power to do something. We realize that God has the power to do whatever He chooses

in our lives and through our lives as we yield to Him.

Then we have a whole series of words that tell how much the Lord is able to do as we yield to Him. The word translated “exceedingly” means beyond what we can imagine. This word is then followed by the words abundantly and above all. As a result, these words are like saying much, much, much, more than we can imagine. The word translated “ask” talks about our prayers as we make our requests to God. In Matthew 7:7-8 Christ said, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.” Here we see that Christ promised to answer our prayers as we pray for His will and His work in the world. The word that is translated “think” means what we are able to understand or perceive with the mind. When all of these words in this verse are put together, we see that God is able to do far beyond what we could ever imagine as we allow His power to work through our lives.

Since it is God who will do all these things in and through our lives, He is the One who deserves all of the glory for whatever He chooses to accomplish through our lives. 1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” We want to show our children that our goal is to bring glory to the Lord by all that we do. This glory will be seen in the church as the Lord works through the church. What God chooses to do will be by Christ Jesus. It will have an impact to all generations. In fact it will have an eternal impact.

God wants to do more through our lives and the lives of our physical and spiritual children than we could ever imagine. That can happen as we show our children how to empty their lives of self so that both ours and their lives are filled with all of the fullness of God because we are yielding to God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand what God wants to do through their lives.

Learning How to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

In our last topic, we saw the prayer of Paul for his spiritual children. Paul gave us an example of the way that we should pray for our physical and spiritual children. We also saw that God is able to do much more than we can ever imagine as we empty ourselves of sin and our selfish desires so that our lives can be filled with all of the fullness of God. As that happens in our lives, God will work mightily in our lives and through our lives. In our topic today, we see that we want to help our children learn to keep the unity of the Spirit.

Paul had shared with the Ephesian Christians how he prayed for them. Now, as the prisoner of Christ he begins to share with them how to live if they want to see the Lord do more through their lives than they can ever imagine. Ephesians 4:1-3 says, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." We have seen the great calling to which the Lord has called every Christian. Here we see that we are to walk worthy of that calling. The word that is translated "walk" means the way that we conduct our daily lives. The word that is translated "worthy" means in a manner worthy of or in a way that is pleasing to the Lord.

The phrase "walk worthy" is used two other times in the New Testament. In Colossians 1:9-11 in a prayer of Paul for the Colossians we read, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy." Here we see that Paul prayed that the Colossians would walk worthy of God. Then in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 we read, "You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." In these verses, we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy had provided the Christians in Thessalonica an example of what it means to walk worthy of God. Through prayer and example we can also see our physical and spiritual children learn to walk worthy of God in their lives.

Here in Ephesians 4:2-3 we see several characteristics of a worthy walk. The word that is translated "lowliness" means to have a humble opinion of one's self. The Greeks and the Romans did not even have a word for humble or humility so this word was developed by the Christians by putting two Greek words together. The word that is translated gentleness is one of the nine characteristics of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. The word is used again in Galatians 6:1 where we read, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted." Here we see that even if a Christian is caught in the very act of a trespass that he is to be restored in the spirit of gentleness so that we will not be tempted to sin ourselves.

The word that is translated longsuffering speaks of patience or endurance and is the attitude that we demonstrate if we have a humble and gentle attitude. The word that is translated "bearing with" means to suffer patiently or endure with love. 1 Peter 4:8 says, "And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." It is love that is patient with others that is necessary in order to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We see Paul often spoke of that unity. Philippians 2:2-3 says, "Fulfill my joy by being like-

minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. *Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” As we walk in humbleness and submission to the Spirit, it is possible to maintain that unity.

Ephesians 4:4-6 says, “*There is* one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.” All true Christians are part of one body. In order to function as one, we must all recognize that Christ is the head and then minister in the power of the Spirit. We all have the same hope because we all look forward to eternal life. Christ must be Lord in our lives because our faith is in Him. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” Finally we are also reminded that just as we have the Holy Spirit and Christ in our lives that we also have the Father in our lives and He is the One who is above all things.

As we go on to Ephesian 4:7-10 we read, “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” (Now this, “*He ascended*”--what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” Since the church is one body it has unity. At the same time, just like in the physical body, every part is unique. No two Christians are the same just as no two parts of the body are the same. Even though we have two ears, they are on different sides of the head and so must have a different shape.

Grace speaks of our salvation. However, Romans 12:6 also reminds us that we are given different spiritual gifts by grace. That verse says, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, *let us use them*: if prophecy, *let us prophesy* in proportion to our faith.” We can use the letters of the word “shape” to help us understand why every Christian is unique. The “s” reminds us that we each have different spiritual gifts. The “h” reminds us that God has given each of us a different heart or passion for a different kind of ministry. The “a” reminds us that God has given each of us different abilities. The “p” reminds us that God has given each of us a different personality. The “e” reminds us that God has allowed each of us to have different experiences in life.

Verse 8 is taken from Psalm 68:18 where we read, “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even *from* the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell *there*.” David wrote Psalm 68 after the Lord had given him victory over the Jebusites that lived in the city of Jerusalem. In the time of David the conquering king would bring home the things that had been captured in that city. Here we see that Paul used that as an illustration of the return of Christ to heaven after His death and resurrection. Christ conquered Satan by His death and resurrection and set free those who had once been sinners and prisoners of Satan. Christ also gives each Christian spiritual gifts just as David gave gifts to the people from the things that were captured when Jerusalem was conquered.

Christ came to this earth where He carried out His ministry of equipping the disciples. However, before He returned to heaven He willingly went to the cross to carry out the will of the Father by making payment for our sins. Then His body was placed in the grave and Christ descended into the lower parts of the earth. On the cross Christ told the one thief in Luke 23:43, “And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Before Christ paid the penalty for sin, Old Testament saints could not go directly to heaven because the price for their sins had not yet been paid. As a result, they went to hades which contained two parts – the place of torment and Abraham’s bosom (Paradise). Luke 16:23 describes where the rich man went when it says “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up

his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” As a result, when Christ died He descended into the part of hades known as Paradise.

On the day that Christ rose from the dead, He took Paradise and everyone in Paradise and presented them to the Father in heaven. (This means that hades (hell) now only has the part called the place of torment where all unbelievers go at death.) As a result, 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 tells us that Paradise is now located in the third heaven. Those verses say, “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows--how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” Here we see that to be caught up into the third heaven is to be caught up into Paradise.

Christ is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father because He fulfilled all of the ministries promised about His first coming. In a later topic we will see in Ephesians 4:15-16 that Christ is the head of the church. Since Christ conquered death, He has the authority to give gifts. For each of us who have become Christians since the resurrection and been set free from being the prisoners of Satan, Christ has also given us spiritual gifts just like David gave gifts from the spoils of Jerusalem to the people. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that these gifts are not for self glory. Instead they are the gifts of the risen Christ that are given to each member of His church to make it possible for us to serve Him effectively and in unity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the importance of keeping the unity of the Spirit.

Learning How to Grow to Spiritual Maturity

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to keep the unity of the faith. In order to help our children learn to keep the unity of the faith we want to help them learn to walk worthy of the Lord. We also want to help them grow to understand that their spiritual gifts are not given to them for self glory. Instead those spiritual gifts are given to them to serve Christ and bring glory to God. In order to serve Christ most effectively we need to grow to spiritual maturity. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children grow to spiritual maturity.

In Ephesians 4:11-12 we read, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” In our last topic, we saw that Christ returned to heaven after He had fulfilled all of the ministries promised about His first coming. He is now in heaven where we see in verse 15 that He is the head of the church. As the head of the church we see that Christ gave certain gifts to the whole church. First, we see that He gave apostles. In Acts 1:21-22 we read, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Since the disciples had been praying for several days, they knew that Christ wanted them to choose a replacement for Judas to be a witness of the resurrection since that was the most important responsibility of the apostles.

Christ also gave prophets. In 2 Peter 1:19-21 we see that the prophets gave us the written Word of God. Those verses say, “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit.” The prophets gave us the written Word of God. In Ephesians 2:20 we see that these two ministries form the foundation for the church. That verse says, “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*.” The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection and the prophets gave us the written Word of God. Together with Christ as the chief cornerstone of the church, these form the foundation of the church. They completed their part in equipping the church.

However, we see that Christ still gives us evangelists, pastors and teachers. In verse 12 we see that the ministry of these individuals is to equip all saints for the work of the ministry. Evangelists equip the saints to share the Gospel. Pastors equip the saints to minister to one another. Teachers equip the saints to teach and apply the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 4:2, 5 we read, “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching... But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” Here we see that the particular equipping gift that Timothy had been given was to equip and show the saints how to proclaim the Gospel to those who are not Christians.

The word that is translated pastors in this verse is used 18 times in the New Testament. The other 17 times it is translated shepherd. In most of these passages it talks about Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep or the shepherds that came to visit Christ when He was born in Bethlehem. However, in John 10:2-6 Christ gave an illustration to tell what a shepherd does. Those verses say, “But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads

them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them." Here we see that the sheep hear the voice of the shepherd because he knows them by name; he leads them; he goes before them, and his voice is known by the sheep. Each thing points to the personal relationship between the shepherd and sheep.

The word that is translated teacher speaks of one who is equipped to teach. Luke 6:40 says, "A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher." In this verse the word that is translated perfectly trained is another form of the word translated equipping in Ephesians 4:12. A teacher is one who personally trains or equips others to teach and apply the Word of God accurately. In fact Hebrews 5:12 warns, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." Here we see that the people who received the book of Hebrews had been Christians long enough that they should have been able to teach others. Instead they needed to be retaught the basics of Christianity. We will discuss this last sentence more fully in our next topic.

As we look at what it means to equip the saints for ministry, we see that every saint is to be equipped to share the Gospel, every saint is to be equipped to minister to one another and every saint is to be equipped to teach and apply the Word of God. Only as each saint learns to do each of these things can each saint have an effective and complete ministry to his or her physical and spiritual children. Luke 6:40 quoted in the previous paragraph explains how a teacher equips saints to teach and apply the Word of God. There we saw that a teacher is one who personally trains or equips a person how to teach and apply the Word of God accurately.

Paul explained how he equipped the leaders in Ephesus for evangelism in Acts 20:20-21 where we read, "How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see that Paul taught the leaders publicly how to explain the message of the Gospel. Then he took them with him from house to house to show them how to explain both to the Jews and to the Gentiles the meaning of repentance and faith. This helps us to understand that equipping for evangelism is showing one or a few people at a time how to share the message of repentance and faith with people where they live, work and spend their free time.

In the previous paragraphs we have seen that training people for both effective teaching and effective evangelism is taking people with you and showing them how to minister through on-the-job training. The same is also true in order to show people how to shepherd others. Two illustrations of showing people how to shepherd are given in Acts chapter 2. Acts 2:42 says, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." Then Acts 2:46 says, "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." The leaders of the early church showed what it meant to shepherd as they gathered in small groups for Bible study and fellowship, breaking of bread and time spent in prayer. They also ate meals together in their homes which provided an ideal opportunity to discuss questions and minister to the needs of the new Christians. The leaders who were leading these small groups in homes were showing those in the group how to shepherd others by their own example.

The examples from Scripture given in the previous paragraphs show why team leadership is so important in a church. Ephesians 4:11 makes it clear that leaders are most gifted in one area,

evangelism, shepherding or teaching. However, we see Paul talked about the way that he equipped people for evangelism to both Jews and Gentiles even though he makes in clear in several passages that he was called by Christ to be a teacher of the Gentiles. However, Paul always had a team as he traveled so that the Christians could also learn from the examples of other team members. Acts 20:4 illustrates the team that traveled with Paul to Asia in Acts 20:4 where we read, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia--also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.” The team members did two things. They showed others how to minister and they continued to learn.

Ephesians 4:13 says, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here we see the goals of an equipping ministry. In the early part of this chapter it talks about learning to keep the unity of the faith. One goal is to help every Christian come to the unity of the faith. A second goal is to help every Christian come to a full knowledge of the Son of God. A third goal is to help every Christian become a mature Christian. A fourth goal is to help mature Christians continue to grow with the purpose to help their lives increasingly demonstrate the measure and stature of the fullness of Christ. These goals will only be reached in the lives of each Christian as the leadership team works together to help each Christian grow to maturity in godly character, develop a full knowledge of Christ and be shown by example how to effectively minister to others.

Here we see that part of helping our physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity is encouraging them to spend time with other leaders as well as ourselves so that they can learn from the example of many godly leaders. This will help them grow in godly character and ministry skills in addition to growing in the knowledge of Christ and the whole Word of God. Other leaders will also equip our children by their example more effectively for ministries where we do not have spiritual gifts. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to grow to spiritual maturity.

Learning How to Speak the Truth in Love

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity. We saw that equipping our children for ministry includes taking them with us and showing them how we minister. We saw that this process also helps them to developing godly character and ministry skills in addition to growing in their knowledge of Christ and His Word. Today, in this topic we are going to see what will happen if we fail to help our children grow to spiritual maturity. We will also see what will happen if we are obedient to the Lord and help them grow to spiritual maturity.

In Ephesians 4:14 we read, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” The word that is translated “children” speaks about a child that has not yet reached the age where he or she can speak clearly. It is normally used of physical children who are a year or two old in age. However, in four passages it is used to speak of spiritual children who have not grown to spiritual maturity. Instead they have remained spiritually immature even though some have been Christians for many years. Such Christians cannot help others mature because they are not mature. We will look at ten characteristics of spiritual toddlers given in those four passages.

In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?” The word that is translated “carnal” means a person that is controlled by the desires of their flesh (a spiritual toddler) instead of led by the Lord. In these verses, we see three characteristics of a spiritual toddler. In verse one we see that a spiritual toddler acts like a person that is not a Christian. In verse two we see that such a person is unable to understand difficult teachings from the Word of God. In verse three we see that when there are many spiritual toddlers in a church, especially if they are leaders, that the church experiences envy, strife and divisions.

In 1 Corinthians 13:11 we read, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” In this verse, we see that the word for a toddler is used five times. A physical toddler talks with baby talk and is hard to understand. A spiritual toddler has a difficult time clearly explaining any Biblical teachings and often substitutes human ideas instead. The understanding of a physical toddler is limited. The same is true for a spiritual toddler because his understanding of spiritual things is limited. The thinking of a toddler is focused on what he or she wants right now. The focus of the spiritual toddler is what he or she wants right now instead of long term spiritual growth.

In Hebrews 5:11-14 we read, “Of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” In these verses, we see four characteristics of spiritual toddlers. In verse eleven we see that a spiritual toddler is dull of hearing to spiritual truth even though the person has been a Christian for a period of time. In verse twelve we see that a spiritual toddler needs to be retaught the basics of

Christianity. In verse thirteen we see that the toddler is unskillful in the word of righteousness. In verse fourteen we see that the senses of the toddler are not developed to recognize good and evil.

In our verse in Ephesians 4:14 we read, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Here we see two characteristics of the spiritual toddler. He is tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. He is easily deceived by false teachers. As a result we see the following ten characteristics of spiritual toddlers:

1. He acts like one who is not a Christian - 1 Corinthians 3:1
2. He is not able to understand difficult teachings from the Word - 1 Corinthians 3:2
3. He experiences envy, strife and divisions - 1 Corinthians 3:3
4. His talk, understanding and thinking of spiritual things is limited - 1 Corinthians 13:11
5. He is tossed to and fro by every false teaching - Ephesians 4:14
6. He is easily deceived by false teachers - Ephesians 4:14
7. He is dull of hearing to spiritual truth - Hebrews 5:11
8. He needs to be retaught the basics of Christianity - Hebrews 5:12
9. He is unskillful in the word of righteousness - Hebrews 5:13
10. His senses are not developed to recognize good and evil - Hebrews 5:14

In contrast Ephesians 4:15-16 points out what happens when our goal is to help the whole church grow to spiritual maturity. Those verses say, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” As we help our children and all Christians grow to spiritual maturity, we will see the following things happen in the lives of our children and others.

First, our children will learn to speak the truth. As each Christian matures, he or she begins to think Biblically because his or her mind is being transformed by the Word of God. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” As our minds are being transformed we start to spend more time sharing the Word of God instead of our own opinions. As Christ prayed to the Father in John 17:17, He said, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” Christ also said in John 8:32, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” We are free to develop an effective ministry as we speak the truth of the Word of God.

Second, our children will learn to speak the truth in love. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We have been given liberty to both speak for the Lord and serve the Lord. Here we see that our speaking and our service for the Lord will be done in love as we and our children walk in liberty.

Third, our children will learn to grow up into Him in all things who is the head--Christ. Here we see that Christ is the head. In Matthew 28:18 Christ said, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” He is the One who has all authority and power. This is why we begin to practice Galatians 2:20 in our lives as we grow and mature in Christ. That verse says, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” We realize that Christ is the head and that we are here on this earth to carry out the ministry that Christ has prepared for each one of us. As we grow in our understanding of His love for us, we respond by living by faith in the

Son of God.

Fourth, our children will learn to be joined and knit together with the other parts of the body. In 1 John 1:7 we read, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” As we and our children are learning to walk in the light we are learning how to share our lives with other Christians so that we learn to act as a unified body instead of a group of individuals.

Fifth, our children will learn that every Christian has something to contribute to the proper functioning of the body. Colossians 2:19 says, “And not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God.” In the previous verse Paul was warning about false teaching. Here in this verse he shows the contrast when we recognize Christ as the Head. The whole body of Christ is nourished and knit together because every part of the body is functioning in unity with the other parts.

Sixth, our children will learn to understand the importance of letting every part learn to do its share. In an immature church, only a small percentage of the Christians are learning to function and do their share. In a healthy church every single Christian is being shown how they can share in the life and ministry of the church. That is why Paul said in Acts 20:20, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house.” Paul showed and taught people both publicly and from house to house so that every Christian could learn how to serve.

When these six things are happening in a church that church will be a healthy church that is building itself up in love. Romans 15:2 says, “Let each of us please *his* neighbor for *his* good, leading to edification.” As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to do the things that show love, serve others and help others to be built up in their spiritual lives, the Lord will greatly use the ministry of our children. They will also receive great blessings as they see the Lord work through their lives. That will give their lives great purpose and meaning. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to speak the truth in love.

Learning to Walk as New People in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to speak the truth in love. We also saw that we want to help them learn to function as a part of the body of Christ. It will give their lives great meaning and purpose as they begin to understand that the Lord has created them for good works and they are shown how function as a part of the body of Christ of which Christ is the Head. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to walk as new people in Christ.

This section begins by reminding us of what we were like before we placed our faith in Christ. Ephesians 4:17-19 says, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” We are reminded of the way that we used to walk and that Gentiles who have not placed their faith in Christ continue to walk. Walk talks about our daily conduct.

First, we see that the daily actions of Gentiles who are not Christians are based on the futility of their mind. The word that is translated “futility” here is translated emptiness in 2 Peter 2:18 where we read, “For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.” This verse is talking about false teachers. Here we see that such false teachers try to impress people with their words. However, they are actually using their words to stir up the sinful desires of the flesh in an effort to get others to commit more outrageous sins without shame. Here we see that those who are not Christians live to satisfy themselves by sin.

Second, we see that the Gentiles are alienated from God. These verses tell us that the daily lifestyle of those who are not Christians is the result of having their understanding darkened. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” They cannot understand spiritual truth because they are spiritually blind. The word that is translated “ignorance” speaks of ignorance of godly things or moral blindness. Separation from God prevents spiritual understanding. The word that is translated “blindness” is translated hardness in Mark 3:5 where we read, “And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” In this case the religious leaders were condemning a man for coming to Christ on the Sabbath to be healed. In Ephesians 4:18 we also see that the Gentiles are alienated from God by spiritual blindness and hardness of heart.

Third, we see that the Gentiles are past feeling. The word that is translated “past feeling” means to cease to feel pain or grief. Titus 1:15 says, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” Here we see that Gentiles without Christ reach a point where they defile their conscience and their sins no longer bother them.

Fourth, we see that the Gentiles are following all uncleanness with greediness. Once people have reached a point where their consciences no longer bother them they turn to all forms of sin to satisfy themselves. The word that is translated “uncleanness” speaks of impurity and lustful

living. Ephesians 5:5 says, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Here we see that moral impurity and greediness (covetousness) often go together. This shows that such individuals have a desire for more of all kinds of sin.

In contrast, we see that the Lord gives us a desire to see our lives changed and transformed when we place our faith in Christ. Ephesians 4:20-23 says, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Here we see what brought us to Christ and changed our lives.

First, we see that we learned about Christ. The word translated “learned” means to increase in knowledge. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” The process of being drawn to Christ includes increasing in our knowledge and understanding of Him. Mark 4:26-29 says, “And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” This passage makes it clear that it normally takes time between the time that we first hear about Christ and the time when we place our faith in Christ. We were drawn to Christ over time as people shared the Word of God with us.

Second, we see that we have heard Christ. The word that is translated “heard” can mean to come to an understanding. James 1:19-20 uses the word when it says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” In these verses, we see that coming to an understanding because we hear will prevent wrath. Our verse in Ephesians talks about coming to an understanding of the Gospel.

Third, we see that we have been taught by Him. Once we come to Christ we see that the Holy Spirit begins to teach us. 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit begins to teach us and help us to understand spiritual things. That is why it was possible for our lives to begin to change from the moment that we placed our faith in Christ.

As we learn the truth of Christ, we see that Christ calls us to put off the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The old man is our old sin nature. The word that is translated “put off” speaks of taking off old or dirty clothes. The same word is translated cast off in Romans 13:12 where we read, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” We are to remove the sins of our former lives just like we would take off dirty clothes at the end of working a long day out in the fields. Here we are reminded that we have the power to stop doing the things that we formerly did as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give us His strength to do what is right.

Verse 23 tells us, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Here we see how the Lord changes and transforms our lives. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” We see that as Christians the Lord gives us His power to learn to think a whole new way. As we hear, read, study, memorize and meditate on the Word

of God we begin replacing our thoughts with God's thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, "'For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" We begin to think differently as we replace our thoughts with God's thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." As we begin to think the thoughts of God, He will give us power to obey His Word as we yield to the Spirit and ask Him for strength.

This is why Ephesians 4:24 says, "And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness." The old man was our old sin nature which we had at the time that we were born physically. The new man is the new nature that we receive at the moment of salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." At the moment of salvation this new nature gives us a desire to live to please God. We have new desires and are given the power to live a new life and carry out those new desires as we learn to confess our sins and yield our lives to the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

We see that the new man is really a restoration to the state that Adam had before he sinned. We are given the freedom to again make wise choices and do the things that are pleasing to God. We can do as Adam did and choose to sin. However, we have been set free from the control of sin so that we are now able to choose to do what is right and pleasing to God. Then we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to give us the power to carry out those choices. As we help our physical and spiritual children fully understand what it means to be a new creation in Christ, they begin to realize that they can now walk as new people in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children and help your children learn to walk in Christ.

Learning to Put Away the Actions of the Past

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk as new people in Christ. We saw that at the moment of salvation that we were given a new nature with new desires. We also saw that as we learn to think Biblically that we grow in our understanding of the things that are pleasing to God. In addition, we were reminded that we were given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation so that we have the power to carry out the things that are pleasing to God. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to put away the actions of the past and learn to carry out those actions that are pleasing to the Lord.

The first action that we are encouraged to put away is lying. Ephesians 4:25 says, "Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another." Here we see that the Lord encourages us to put away lying and speak the truth to our neighbor instead. Then this verse tells us why we should make this change. It reminds us that we are members of one another. The word "members" speaks of the various parts of the body such as the arm, the leg or the tongue. Here we are reminded that as Christians we are all parts of the body of Christ. Romans 12:4-5 says, "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." Just as our tongue does not lie to our arm, as Christians we are to speak the truth to one another.

Ephesians 4:26-27 says, "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil." This verse is quoted from Psalm 4:4-5 where we read, "Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD." Here we see that it is possible to be angry and still not commit sin. That will happen if we hate the sin but love the sinner. The Father hated our sins so much that He said that the penalty for sin is death. At the same time the Father loved each of us individually so much that He sent His Son to pay that penalty so that He could freely forgive all who would repent and turn to Christ for forgiveness. Christ hated our sins so much and at the same time loved each of us so much that He paid that penalty by shedding His own blood in our place and for our sins. We can be angry without sinning as long as we love the sinner and hate the sin.

At the same time that we love the sinner and hate the sin, we are not to let that anger turn to wrath. Another form of the word translated "wrath" is used in Ephesians 6:4 where we read, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." A father provokes his children to wrath when he exasperates them and stirs up their anger so that it becomes continuing anger against the parent. Such wrath when held inside a person can turn to bitterness. We are to make certain that our anger against sin does not turn to anger against the sinner or we will give the devil an opportunity to develop bitterness in the life of that person.

Ephesians 4:28 says, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need." Before people come to Christ, many will steal to get what they want. As Christians our lives are to be an example for Christ. As a result, we are told to labor or work until we are exhausted. Acts 20:35 tells us why this should be our attitude. That verse says, "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" By working hard we see that we have

extra to share with those who are needy. Here we see that the love of Christ gives us a concern for the needs of others and not just our own needs.

Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers." The word that is translated "corrupt" means something that is rotten, worthless or smells bad. Matthew 12:33 says, "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by *its* fruit." In our verse in Ephesians this word is translated corrupt. In most of the other places where it is used it talks about bad or rotten fruit. If the roots of a tree or rotten, the fruit will be rotten. If corrupt or evil words come out of our mouth, those words help us to realize what is in our heart.

Instead of destructive words, we see that we are to speak words that will build up others. The word that is translated "good" means that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects. In Galatians 6:10 we read, "Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith." Here we see that we are to look for opportunities to do good to all including those who are not Christians. In Ephesians 2:10 we read, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." In this verse, we see that we have been created for good works. As a result, we want to speak words that will build up others and help them to grow in their spiritual lives. Jesus gave us the example of how to speak when Luke 4:22 says, "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" We also want to speak words that bring grace to the hearers.

Ephesians 4:30-31 tell us that we grieve the Holy Spirit with corrupt words and then gives us a list of attitudes that cause evil words and tell us to put away those attitudes. Those verses say, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice." Here we are reminded that evil speaking grieves the Holy Spirit. The word that is translated "grieve" In these verses, means to make sorrowful or cause to be sad. The word was used of Christ when He went to pray in the garden just before He was betrayed by Judas. Matthew 26:37 says, "And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed." We need to remember that when we speak evil words that it causes great sorrow to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit that was placed in us as a seal until the day that the Lord takes us to heaven and so we want to avoid causing Him sorrow.

We are given a list of six attitudes and actions that cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit that are related to our speaking. The word translated bitterness here is the same word that is used in Hebrew 12:15 where we read, "Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled." We see that a root of bitterness in our hearts will defile many people. Wrath speaks of anger that boils up often with both words and actions. Luke 4:28-29 says, "So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff." Here wrath caused the people of Nazareth to try and kill Christ.

The word that is translated "anger" here is often translated wrath but is a different word than the word that was translated wrath earlier in the verse. This word is used in 1 Thessalonians 5:9 where we read, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here the word speaks of the coming eternal judgment. It speaks of a deep inward hostility. The word translated "clamor" speaks of a crying out or shouting. Acts 23:9

says, "Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God." In this verse, the Pharisees and Sadducees were shouting at each other. Evil speaking is another word for slander. Malice speaks of any evil that desires to hurt others even if it means breaking the law to cause that hurt to others.

In contrast to such words and actions, Ephesians 4:32 says, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." Here we see that actions that show Christian love. The word that is translated "kind" means what is virtuous, useful and good. Christ used this word in Luke 6:35 where we read, "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil." Here we see that God is kind even to those who are unthankful and evil. The word that is translated "tenderhearted" in this verse means to have great compassion toward others.

We also see that we are to be forgiving of one another. This word translated "forgiving" means to grant forgiveness or pardon to another person. This means that we do not hold the sins of another person against that person any longer. We see that we are to forgive others because God forgave us due to the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sins. Colossians 2:13-14 says, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." God forgave us all of our trespasses. He blotted out everything that was written against us at the moment we placed our faith in Christ. We want to help our children understand that is why we and they should forgive others in the same way and for the same reason that God forgave us. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to put away the actions of the past and ask Christ to help them learn to follow His example, our children will be greatly blessed by the way the Lord works in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to put away the actions of the past.

Learning to Avoid the Sins of the Flesh

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to put away the sinful actions that we practiced before we placed our faith in Christ. Such actions are common among those who are not Christians. However, Christ has given us new desires and new attitudes that give us a desire to develop new actions. Those old actions could be called the sins of the flesh. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to avoid the sins of the flesh.

In Ephesians 5:1-2 we read, “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.” Paul wrote to the Ephesians as his dear children. In 1 Corinthians 11:1 Paul had earlier written to the Corinthians, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” Here we see that Paul was encouraging the Christians in Corinth to follow his example as he followed Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6 we read, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” What Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth to do, the Christians in Thessalonica had done from the beginning of their spiritual lives. Here we are reminded that people learn to follow the Lord by following the Lord’s people. As Christians, if we greatly love our physical and spiritual children, we will invite our children to imitate us just as we imitate Christ.

Paul also encouraged the Ephesian Christians to walk in love. To walk in love is to learn to imitate the life of Christ. Galatians 5:13, 16 say, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another...I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” To walk in love we must walk in the Spirit. Then we will follow the example of Christ and serve one another in love. Christ showed His love for us by giving Himself for us. When Christ died on the cross for us, we see that God viewed the sacrifice of Christ to pay the penalty for our sins as a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. Here we see that the sacrifice that Christ made for our sins was well pleasing to God. When we walk in love, we see such a walk is also well pleasing to God.

We also see that walking in love will cause us to avoid certain actions and certain words. Ephesians 5:3-4 say, “But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.” The word that is translated “fornication” includes all forms of sexual impurity including any sexual relationship outside the relationship of a husband and wife. The word that is translated “uncleanness” speaks of any lustful or wild living. These sins are at the start of the list in Galatians 5:19-21 where we read, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Here we see that these are the works of people who do not have spiritual life.

The word “covetousness” speaks of a greedy desire to have more. 1 Timothy 6:6-10 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish

and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of evil*, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here we see that covetousness is a temptation and snare that destroys many people. In fact, fornication and covetousness are often mentioned together. That is why saints are encouraged to even avoid talk about such things.

We are also encouraged to avoid other sins of the tongue. The word that is translated “filthiness” speaks of using obscene words. Foolish talking is talk that is degrading, foolish or dirty. The word that is translated “course jesting” speaks of jokes that are dirty, suggestive or immoral. This kind of talking is common among people that are not Christians. However, we see here that such talk is not fitting or appropriate for Christians. Instead we are to speak words of thankfulness. In Colossians 2:6-7 we read, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” As our lives become rooted and grounded in Christ, we see that our speech will be filled with thanksgiving.

We also see the judgment is facing those whose actions and words are based on the sins of the flesh. Ephesians 5:5-7 says, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” One of the key things that we see in these verses is that God says that a covetous person is an idolater. Here we are reminded that money or things have become the idols of those who are covetous. Empty words come from a sinful heart. James 1:26 says, “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one's religion *is* useless.” In these verses, we see that the people who practice these things have not placed their faith in Christ and they are still facing eternal judgment.

That is why we want to help our children learn to understand the danger of becoming a partaker in the actions or words of those who do not know Christ. The word that is translated “partaker” means to share jointly in something. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 3:6 where we read, “That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” In that verse we see that Jews and Gentiles who become Christians share jointly in the life of Christ that we receive through the Gospel. Here in Ephesians 5:7 we see that those who are sharing jointly in sinful living with unbelievers need to seriously examine their lives to see that they have true faith in Christ.

Ephesians 5:8-10 goes on to tell what will help us to avoid the sins of the flesh. Those verses say, “For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.” Here we see a key point because it helps us to understand why we did what we did before we became Christians. We were in darkness. Luke 11:34 says, “The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore, when your eye is good, your whole body also is full of light. But when *your eye* is bad, your body also *is* full of darkness.” Before a person becomes a Christian the whole body is full of darkness. That is why Zacharias said in Luke 1:79, “To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.” Zacharias spoke of the fact that Christ would give light to those in darkness.

As Christians, we are to learn to walk in the light. 1 John 1:5-7 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one

another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” To walk in the light is to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” As we help our children learn to walk in the light (walk in the Spirit), the Holy Spirit will begin to bear His fruit in their lives. Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” The Spirit produces that fruit in our lives as we walk in the light.

Three things are mentioned in Ephesians 5 that happen when we walk in the light. First, the word that is translated “goodness” speaks of being upright in our heart and life. Romans 15:14 says, “Now I myself am confident concerning you, my brethren, that you also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” Paul was confident that the Christians in the city of Rome were full of goodness. Second, the word that is translated “righteousness” speaks of actions that are pleasing to God. Ephesians 4:24 says, “And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” We see in the previous verses that we are to put off the old man and the evil of the sin nature. Here we see that we have been given a new nature that desires to practice the righteousness of God. We are able to practice that righteousness in our lives at any time that we are yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Third, the word that is translated “truth” means to speak the truth. When we are walking in the light we are able to speak truth because we are allowing the Lord to speak through our lives. Ephesians 4:25 says, “Therefore, putting away lying, “Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,” for we are members of one another.” Because we have been given a new nature we are able to speak the truth to one another. As we help our physical and spiritual learn to put away the sins of the flesh and learn to walk in the light, we will see that their lives will show the results of walking in the light both by what they say and what they do. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to avoid the works of the flesh and practice the works of light.

Learning to Understand the Will of God

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to avoid the sins of the flesh. Instead we saw that we want to help them learn to walk in the light. We saw that they are able to walk in the light as they walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives them the power to practice goodness and do those things that are right in the sight of God. He helps them learn to speak the truth of the Word of God. In our topic today, we are going to see that God wants us to help our children understand the will of God for their lives.

We want to help our children learn to understand what is well pleasing to the Lord as they serve Him in their lives. In Ephesians 5:11-12 we read, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them*. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret.” The word that is translated fellowship here is not the normal word for fellowship. In fact the word is used only two other times in the New Testament, one positive and the other negative. Since this one is also negative, the other negative use is in Revelation 18:4 where we read, “And I heard another voice from heaven saying, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.” This verse is talking about the final destruction of Babylon and the word is warning tribulation saints not to share in the sins of Babylon.

As a result, this passage makes it clear that Christians are not to share in the unfruitful works of darkness. The works of darkness are the works of Satan. Instead of bearing fruit, the works of Satan are designed to carry out his evil plans. John 10:10 says, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.” Here we see that the goal of Satan is always to steal, to kill and to destroy. A Christian can never bring glory to the Lord by sharing in the works of Satan because his works have as their goal destruction leading people to the eternal misery of eternal judgment.

Those who are practicing the works of Satan do not like to come to the light. John 3:20 says, “For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.” As we teach the Word of God, we expose the works of Satan. However, even though we are to expose the works of darkness, we are not to reject the people who are still in bondage to Satan that are committing those evil works. Christ was known as a friend of sinners. In 1 Corinthians 5:9-10 we see that we are also to be a friend to sinners. Those verses say, “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” Here we see that we are to be a friend to sinners so that we can lead them to Christ. However, 1 Corinthians 5:11 says, “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.” Here we see that the person we are not to fellowship with is a Christian brother who continues to practice the works of Satan.

That is why Ephesians 5:13-14 says, “But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: “Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light.” Here we see that it is the Word of God that exposes sin. That is the very reason why we are to share the Word of God when we speak to others because God is the only One who truly knows what is in their hearts. 1 Corinthians 14:24-25 says, “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is

convinced by all, he is convicted by all. And thus the secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you.” Notice this is prophesy with an “s” and not prophecy with a “c”. To prophesy means to share what is already written down in the Word of God. The Word of God will expose the secret sins of the heart of both the unbeliever and the believer.

The word “manifest” means to make known, to reveal or to expose what has been hidden. In this verse, we see that the Word of God reveals the unfruitful works of darkness. As a result, when we share the Word of God, it shines the light of the Word of God on the heart of mankind. When the light of the Word shines in the heart of a believer, it exposes to that Christian the thoughts in his heart that are sinful so that he can confess and forsake them. Proverbs 28:13 says, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy.” When a Christian has unconfessed sin in his heart, he cannot be blessed by the Lord. However, 1 John 1:9 promises, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God will use His Word to reveal hidden sin in a Christian.

We also see that the Word of God will bring light to those who are not Christians. Paul quoted from a combination of Isaiah 26:19 which says, “Your dead shall live; *together with* my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew *is like* the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.” and Isaiah 60:1 which says, “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you.” Here we see that Paul uses these verses to show that the Word of God will also draw those who are not Christians to Christ because the Father will use the Word to draw them and give them the faith to believe in Christ.

Ephesians 5:15-17 then goes on to say, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord *is*.” Here we see the way that we are to walk if we are Christians. The word that is translated “circumspectly” means to understand accurately or to walk diligently. Luke used the word when he said in Luke 1:3, “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.” He also used it when he spoke of Apollos in Acts 18:25 where we read, “This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.” Here we see that to walk circumspectly means to walk as wise and not as fools.

A fool is a person that leaves God out of his thinking and actions. Psalm 14:1 says, “The fool has said in his heart, “*There is no God.*” They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.” Here we see that because a fool leaves God out of his thinking that his works are corrupt and abominable. In contrast, Proverbs 1:5 says, “A wise *man* will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.” Then Proverbs 1:7 adds, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *but* fools despise wisdom and instruction.” When we have a reverence and respect for the Lord, He will give us wisdom and instruction.

That wisdom will cause us to redeem the time. The word that is translated “time” speaks of a fixed period of time. For the Christian, that would be the time from the moment of salvation until the Lord takes us to heaven. The word that is translated “redeeming” is only used four times in the New Testament. It is used in Galatians 3:13 and Galatians 4:5 to speak of the fact that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law. The only other use is in Colossians 4:5 where we read, “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time.” In both Ephesians and Colossians we see that we are to be making the best use of the time that we have on this earth. Since we have a fixed amount of time on this earth, we are to make wise and

godly use of our time in all of our contacts with those who are not Christians to help them come to the knowledge of Christ so that they can turn from the works of darkness to faith in Christ.

In order to redeem that fixed period of time that we have remaining in our lives, we are to understand what the will of Lord is. In 2 Peter 3:9 we read, “The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Here we see that God wants all people to come to repentance. Then in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 we see that it is the will of God that we pray because 1 Timothy 2:3-4 says, “For this *is* good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Here we see that we also want to help our children to learn to pray for the salvation of others who are not yet Christians because God desires all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

We also see that it is the will of God that we and our children are filled with the Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” We see the result when we pray and are filled with the Spirit. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.” Then we see that we are to pray this same thing for others. As Paul asked for prayer in Ephesians 6:19-20 he said, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” We see that as we help our physical and spiritual children understand the will of God that we can then pray for each other that God will help us all to carry out His will of sharing the Gospel boldly with those who are not yet Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the will of God.

Learning the Foundation for Submission

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our physical and spiritual children understand the will of God. We saw that one of the things that God desires is that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. We saw that it is also the will of God for us to share the Word of God with boldness with those who are not Christians. There are also many other things that are the will of God. In this and the following two topics we are going to see that it is the will of God that we are in submission to one another. In order to carry out the will of God, we see that we are to be filled with the Spirit.

In Ephesians 5:18-21 we see the attitudes that will be present in our lives when we are filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18-19 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” We begin this section by having a contrast so that we understand what it means to be filled with the Spirit. This form of the word translated “drunk” is only used two other times in the New Testament. Both relate to people who are unprepared at the coming of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:7-8 says, “For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation.” Here we see that as Christians we are to demonstrate faith, love and hope instead of drunkenness. Dissipation speaks about the drunken celebrations that often went along with the worship of idols.

Instead of being totally controlled by the effects of drunkenness, Christians are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The word that is translated “filled” means to fill to the brim. This word is used in the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3:19 where Paul prayed, “To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We saw in our last topic that one of the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit is that we will speak the Word of God with boldness. Here we see that when we are filled with the Holy Spirit that certain attitudes will be present in our lives.

First, we see that we will be speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. Psalms is usually used to speak of a particular Psalm or a larger part of the Old Testament. However, in Colossians 3:16 we read, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Here we see that we use the Word of God to teach and admonish one another with wisdom. We are also to use hymns and spiritual songs for the same reason. The word “hymns” is only used in these two verses in Ephesians and Colossians and probably refers to a song that focused on Christ. Spiritual songs may refer to songs that speak of the salvation that Christ provided for us. The word translated “making melody” means to play on a stringed instrument. As a result, we can either sing in our heart or think of the tune in our heart.

Ephesians 5:20-21 says, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God.” In these verses, we see two other attitudes that we will have. The second attitude that we will have is an attitude of thanks. Here we see that a true attitude of thanks gives thanks to God for all things. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among

many brethren.” In these verses, we see that God takes everything including things that may be negative in our lives and uses it to conform us to the image of Christ. As a result, we can be thankful for all things.

The third attitude that we see in these verses is an attitude of submission. Here we see that we are to be submitting to one another in the fear of God. 1 Peter 5:5-6 says, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for “God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.” The word that is translated “submitting yourselves” means to arrange yourself under the leadership of one another. It has the thought of humbly placing our full potential at the disposal of another person. We are going to see that we are given six examples of submission. In this verse, we see that we are to submit ourselves to all Christians. In the following verses we see how:

Wives place their full potential at the disposal of their husbands – Ephesians 5:22-24

Husbands place their full potential at the disposal of their wives – Ephesians 5:25-33

Children place their full potential at the disposal of their parents – Ephesians 6:1-3

Fathers place their full potential at the disposal of their children – Ephesians 6:4

Servants place their full potential at the disposal of their masters – Ephesians 6:5-8

Masters place their full potential at the disposal of their servants – Ephesians 6:9

Ephesians 5:22-24 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything.” Although the word submit is not in the original manuscripts, it is implied here and in each of the following relationships that we will study in our next two topics.

One key thing to notice here is that wives are to place their full potential at the disposal of their own husband rather than someone else’s husband. What we learn in our next topic will show that husbands are to do the same and place their full potential at the disposal of their own wife rather than someone else’s wife. Colossians 3:18-19 says, “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them.” Wives show their submission because it is fitting in the Lord. Husbands show their submission by loving and not becoming bitter toward their wives. We also see that a wife is to submit to her husband in the same way that she submits to the Lord. Christ gave His life for us and so our desire is to submit to Him in love.

We also see that the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church. In 1 Corinthians 11:3 we read, “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman *is* man, and the head of Christ *is* God.” Here we see that headship talks about leadership. Christ and the Father are equal. However, the Father is the head of Christ because He is the One who wills all things. John 6:38-39 says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.” Christ chose to place His full potential at the disposal of the Father and carry out the will of the Father by His death. Although the wife and husband are equal, the wife is to choose to recognize her husband as the head of the family so that the family can function effectively.

We also saw another thing that the headship of Christ meant in an earlier topic. Ephesians 4:15-16 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” In these verses, we see that when we recognize

Christ as the head that we will speak the truth. We will also speak in love. This is what makes it possible for every part to work effectively for the Lord. Here we see that as the wife recognizes the headship (leadership) of her husband that the home will be a place where each member of the family will learn to speak the truth in love and each member of the family will learn to serve the Lord.

We see why the husband is given the leadership in the second half of the verse. The reason God gave this leadership to the husband is due to the fact that he has the responsibility to provide spiritual and physical protection to the wife. That was the very thing that Adam failed to do for Eve in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:5-6 says, "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Here we see that Adam failed to provide spiritual protection to his wife. Notice the place where Adam was located while Satan was tempting Eve. Verse six says that he was with her.

We see that just as the church is to be in submission to Christ in everything that in the same way the wife is to be in submission to her husband in everything. In a home where both the wife and the husband are Christians, the husband has the opportunity to model what submission means by his submission to Christ. In a home where the husband is not a Christian, 1 Peter 3:1 and 4 say, "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives...rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God." In these verses, we see that the submissive attitude of the wife shown by a gentle and quiet spirit will often win the husband to Christ. As we show our physical and spiritual children the attitudes that are the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit, we will also be showing them how to develop a submissive attitude both toward the Lord and in the family. Our example gives our children an example to follow. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand the foundation for submission.

Learning to Submit as Husbands

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the results of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We saw that those who are filled with the Spirit will have three attitudes present in their lives. First, they will have a song in their hearts. Second, they will have an attitude of thanks to God in all things. Third, they will have an attitude of submission to one another. In addition to this attitude of submission being shown between all Christians, we said that we will see specific instructions for six key relationships where we are to practice submission. In our last topic, we saw the instructions of how a wife shows submission to her husband. In our topic today, we will see how a husband shows submission to his wife.

Ephesians 5:25-27 says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” First, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by loving her just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. In 1 Peter 2:21 we read, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.” In this verse, we see that Christ gave an example for husbands by the way that He gave His life for the church.

Then 1 Peter 2:22-24 says, “Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth”; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Christ did not sin. Christ did not speak deceit. Christ did not revile. Christ did not threaten. Christ committed himself to the Father. Christ suffered for the sake of the church. These six things are six things that husbands will do in their relationship with their wife if they follow the example of Christ. Then 1 Peter 3:7 adds two additional things, “Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” Husbands are to also show an understanding attitude. Husbands are to also give honor to their wife.

Second, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by sanctifying and cleansing her with the washing of water by the word.” Here we see that a husband is to help his wife in her spiritual growth by sharing the Word of God with her and explaining the Word of God to her. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Some wives may have much guilt or shame because of their past life. Here we see that a husband is to purify his wife from the past by helping her to understand the greatness of the forgiveness of God. A husband does this by helping his wife to understand what the Word of God teaches about the forgiveness of God.

Third, we see that a husband is to submit to his wife by helping her become a glorious wife without spot or wrinkle. The word that is translated “glorious” means that which is honorable or esteemed. Proverbs 31:28 says, “Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband *also*, and he praises her.” Here we see that a submissive husband gives praise to his wife for her godly life and character. He wants others to know and recognize her ministry for the Lord.

We see how much a husband is to love his wife in the following verses. Ephesians 5:28-30 says, “So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord *does* the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.” Here we see that a husband is to love his wife in the same way that he loves his own body. Most men take very good care of their bodies. Men do not treat their flesh with hatred. Instead they provide the things that their body needs.

We see that there are two specific ways that men care for themselves that they are to show in their care and concern for their wives. First, a man nourishes his own body. The word that is translated “nourishes” means to bring up or to nourish to maturity. The only other place this word is used is in Ephesians 6:4 where we read, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” In this verse, we see that nourishing or training means to bring them to spiritual maturity. A husband is to have a great concern to help his wife grow to spiritual maturity so that they can serve the Lord together as a team.

Second, a man cherishes his own body. The word that is translated “cherishes” means to keep warm or to cherish with tender love. The only other place this word was used in the New Testament is in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 where we read, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.” When a mother is nursing a baby she holds that baby close to her and keeps that baby warm as she feeds it so that the child receives tender love. As a husband treats his wife with tender love, he gives her great security because that wife knows that she is greatly loved by her husband.

These two things are also two ways that Christ shows His love to the church. We are reminded that Christ treats us with tender love because we are members of His body, His flesh and bones. The word that is translated “members” speaks of the parts of the body. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” Christ shows great love to every Christian because every Christian is a part of His body. Then 1 Corinthians 12:26 says, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*.” A loving husband will suffer with his wife when she suffers and rejoice with her when she rejoices.

Ephesians 5:31-33 goes on to say, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife *see* that she respects *her* husband.” Here we see that Paul quotes from Genesis 2:24 to help a husband understand the plan of God for marriage. Adam and Eve had no parents yet God said to Adam in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” God gave Adam a principle for all future generations since he had no parents to leave.

The word that is translated “be joined” means to be glued or welded together. Here we see that a husband shows his submission to his wife by helping her to know that they are one in their relationship with each other. A wife receives real security by knowing that her husband has committed himself in a marriage relationship that is permanent and will last as long as they live. One day the Pharisees questioned Christ about divorce to try and justify themselves. Christ answered in Mark 10:7-9, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Here Christ made it very clear that marriage is for life and a husband is to demonstrate that permanence as a part of his

submission to his wife.

Paul said that this kind of a marriage relationship demonstrates a great mystery. A mystery was something that was not revealed in the Old Testament that has now been revealed in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the people thought that the statement to Adam was just about human marriage. Here Paul reveals the mystery that the godly submission of a husband to his wife by making their marriage permanent is actually a demonstration of the fact that the church is the bride of Christ and Christ has committed Himself to the church in a permanent relationship. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present *you as* a chaste virgin to Christ.” The church is the bride of Christ and a husband models that unity by being joined to his wife.

Paul concludes the section on the mutual submission that there is to be between husband and wife by reminding both the husband and the wife of the meaning of submission in the marriage relationship. A husband is reminded that he is to show his submission by loving his wife as he loves himself. A wife is reminded that she is to show her submission by respecting her husband. 1 John 4:18-19 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” Just as an understanding of our relationship with Christ takes away our fear, the relationship of a godly husband and wife will also take away their fear.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to apply submission in their marriages by giving an example for them to follow. If we as a husband and a wife will model the kind of submission described in this passage, we will give our children an example to follow that will help them to build a strong marriage that will last throughout their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to practice submission in marriage.

Learning to Submit in Other Relationships

In our last two topics, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the mutual submission that husbands and wives are to show to each other in their marriage relationship. We saw that a husband is to show submission to his wife by his tender love for her that models the love of Christ for the church. We saw that a wife shows her submission to her husband by her respect for him. In our topic today, we are going to see four other relationships where we are given special instructions about how to apply submission in our daily lives.

First, we see the instructions given to children about their submission to their parents. Ephesians 6:1-3 says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." Here we see that children show their submission to their parents by their obedience. The word that is translated "obey" means to listen and then to take action by following the instructions that are given. This means that the first thing that a parent has to do to develop a submissive child is to teach that child how to really listen. James 1:19-20 says, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." The word that is translated "to hear" means to listen so that there is understanding of what is said. This means that parents choose to model what it means to listen so that there is understanding by the way that they listen to their children.

We also see why children are to obey their parents. The verse says that this is right. The word that is translated "right" means just, righteous or right. This word is used in Colossians 4:1 where we read, "Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven." In this verse, we see that the word is translated just. Masters or employers are to pay their employees fairly because of the fact that it is right to share. The word is also translated just in 1 John 1:9 where we read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Christ is just to forgive and cleanse us from our sins because of the fact that He paid the penalty for those sins and so it is right for Him to forgive us.

It is right for children to obey their parents because it is the only commandment that contains a promise. Exodus 20:12 says, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you." Obedience is an action. Honor is an attitude. The word "honor" means to place value on something. In fact this word is translated value in Matthew 27:9 where we read, "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the value of Him who was priced, whom they of the children of Israel priced." Here we see that those who wanted to condemn Christ placed a value of money that they would pay to the one who betrayed Christ. The leaders of Israel did not honor Christ because they gave a low value to his life. In contrast, children are told to place a high value on their parents. God told the people of Israel that the reward for honoring their parents would be long life in the land that the Lord was giving to them.

Second, we see the instructions given to fathers about their submission to their children. Ephesians 6:4 says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." The word translated fathers can also include mothers as it does in Hebrews 11:23 where we read, "By faith Moses, when he was born, was

hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.” In this verse, the word is translated parents. Parents are given one negative instruction and two positive instructions to show them how to be submissive to their children.

Parents are not to provoke their children to wrath. The word that is translated “provoke to wrath” means to stir up, to exasperate or to arouse to wrath. This happens when parents make unreasonable rules and demands that either discourage or stir up resentment and anger in the lives of their children. The only other place this word is used is in Romans 10:19 where we read, “But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: “I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation.” Here we see that God said that the Jews would be moved to anger or wrath by the fact that God made salvation available to the Gentiles. This anger or wrath was revealed several times when Paul said that God had sent him to the Gentiles. However, God says that parents are not to stir up that kind of anger in their children.

Instead parents are to bring up their children by training and admonition. The word translated “training” was translated nurture in our last topic. There we saw that the word spoke of the tender care that a mother shows to a nursing baby. Parents show their submission by continuing to show that tender love to their children as they grow. Parents also show their submission to their children by bringing them up in the admonition of the Lord. The word that is translated “admonition” means instruction that includes a warning. 1 Corinthians 10:9-11 says, “Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” We give admonition when we give children choices and warn them of the consequences of each choice.

Third, we see the instructions given to servants (employees) about their submission to their masters (employers). Ephesians 6:5-8 says, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether *he is* a slave or free.” Here we see that servants are to be obedient with fear and trembling. This same phrase is used in Philippians 2:12 where we read, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Here we see that fear and trembling speaks of respect for the authority of the Lord. Servants are to respect the authority of their masters.

Servants are also to serve their masters with an honest and open heart in the same way that they would serve Christ. They are not to just work hard when the master is watching because they are seeking the favor of their master. Instead they are to recognize that Christ is their real master and seek to work in such a way that they are doing the will of God from their hearts. Colossians 3:22 says, “Bondservants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.” Servants are to realize that they are serving the Lord and not just the master that they have on this earth.

Servants are to serve their masters with kindness in their hearts. That will happen when they realize that their work for their master is actually an opportunity to serve the Lord by the way that they work for their master. When we work to please the Lord instead of trying to please our master (employer), we see that the Lord is the One who will reward us. This promise is true both for those who are slaves working for a master and for those who are employees working

for an employer. Colossians 3:23-24 says, “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.” When our attitude at work is an attitude of working to please the Lord we can look to the Lord for our reward whether the employer rewards us or not.

Fourth, we see the instructions given to masters (employers) about their submission to their servants (employees). Ephesians 6:9 says, “And you, masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.” Here we see that masters show their submission to the Lord by treating their servants with the same respect and honor that a Christian servant is to show to them. Since the servant is to work for the master as he would work for Christ, the master is to treat the servant the same way that he would treat Christ if it was Christ that was his servant.

One of the ways that a master shows his submission to Christ is by giving up threatening his servants. The word translated “threatening” means, to be abusive, to be inconsiderate or to make threats. This word was used to speak of Paul in Acts 9:1 where we read, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest.” Here we see that Saul was speaking about the evil that he wanted to do to the Christians. We also see how the early Christians responded to threats. Acts 4:29 says, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” Instead of getting upset by threats, the early Christians just prayed that the Lord would give them boldness to speak the Word of God.

Another way a master shows submission to Christ is by treating his servants without partiality. Colossians 4:1 says, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Here we see that a master shows submission by being just and fair. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand the principle of submission, they will be able to apply it in many situations. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand true submission.

Learning to Wear the Armor of God

In our last three topics, we have seen how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to apply the principle of submission in six different situations. We saw that true submission means to place our full potential at the disposal of another. We also saw that Christ gave us an example of such submission by coming to pay the penalty for our sin by shedding His blood on the cross. He did this because it was His desire to do the will of the Father. As true Christians who are showing our children by our example what it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit, we know that we can expect opposition from Satan. Our children will also face opposition as they walk in the Spirit. As a result, the last section of Ephesians shows us how to teach our children to stand against the devil.

In Ephesians 6:10-12 we see the opposition that we and our children will face. Those verses say, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Paul begins this section by reminding us that our strength is in the Lord and in the power of His might. In Philippians 4:13 we read, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul realized that he had to depend on the Lord for strength because he had no strength in himself. The same is true for us.

Paul also understood the power that is available through Christ. We see that we can be strong in the power of His might. The word that is translated “power” in this verse speaks of power or mighty works. This word is translated mightily in Acts 19:20 where we read, “So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.” The word that is translated “might” means strength or ability. This word is used in 1 Peter 4:11 where we read, “If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, *let him do it* as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” We are to serve in the strength or ability that the Lord supplies and not in our own strength.

In order to carry out mighty works in the strength that Christ provides, we are told to put on the whole armor of God. Every piece of armor is needed if we are going to stand against the wiles of the devil. The word “wiles” speaks of the tricks of Satan. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 4:14 where we read, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” In this verse it speaks of false teachers that lie in wait so that they can deceive others. We realize that the conflict that we face as Christians is not against other people. Instead this conflict is against all of the various levels of demons of Satan.

Ephesians 6:13-16 says, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” Here we see that we are told a second time to put on the whole armor of God. God promises us that if we take all of the armor that we will have the power to stand at any time that we face the evils of Satan.

The first three weapons were worn by soldiers at all times whether they were fighting or not. In the same way we need to be equipped at all times with truth, righteousness and the Gospel of peace. Ephesians 4:15 says, "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ." Here we see that we are to speak the truth at all times and we are to speak that truth in love. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Here we are reminded that Christ took our sins on Himself so that when we repent and place our faith in Christ that He is able to put His righteousness on us so that we stand in His righteousness and not our own. Ephesians 2:14-15 says, "For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace." Because we have peace with God through Christ, we know that God is always on our side and that Satan cannot stand against God.

The second three pieces of armor were taken whenever there was a possibility of battle. The shield was usually about 4 ½ feet high and 2 ½ feet wide so that it could protect the entire body from the enemy. We are to take the shield of faith. In Colossians 2:5 we read, "For though I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your *good* order and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ." Here we see that our faith in Christ protects us from the temptations and attacks of the enemy.

We go on to read in Ephesians 6:17-20, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." The helmet provides protection for the head. 1 Thessalonians 5:8 says, "But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and *as* a helmet the hope of salvation." Here we see that the helmet is the hope of salvation. The word that is translated "hope" means that confident assurance that we have in the promises of Christ. Instead of having doubts and discouragements, we can have confident assurance in the promises of Christ.

The only offensive weapon for battle is the sword of the Spirit. We see that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. That is why we want to help our children learn to use the Word of God instead of their own opinions in every situation that they face. Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the Word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Lord knows the thoughts and the intents of people. Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to guide us when we speak to others. Then in 1 Corinthians 2:13 we are told, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual." We see that we do not want to answer questions with our own wisdom. Instead we want to answer any question with the Word of God because God knows what He wants to do in the heart of each person and He is able to speak to either a Christian or a person that is not a Christian through the Word of God.

In addition to taking the armor of God, we see that we are also to be praying at all times. We are to use all forms of prayer. We are to pray in the Spirit which means that we are to have our human spirit in submission to the Holy Spirit. When we have that attitude we will seek the will of God and not our own desires. The word that is translated "watching" means to be awake and ready. This word is used in Mark 13:33 where we read, "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." In Matthew 26:41 Christ told the disciples to watch and pray so that they would not yield to temptation. We are also to pray with perseverance. That means

that we are to continue to pray and not give up. Supplication means that we pray with requests and not demands. Finally we see that we are to pray for all of the saints. Every Christian needs others who pray for him or her.

Paul also asked for prayer for a personal request that he had for his own life. We need to have this same personal request both for our own lives and for our physical and spiritual children. Paul asked that the Ephesians would pray that the Lord would give him the words to speak so that he could speak boldly as he shared the mystery of the Gospel. We also need to pray that the Lord will give us boldness to share the Gospel with others. Paul viewed himself as an ambassador for Christ. However, Paul is not the only ambassador. The only other place where this word is used in the New Testament is 2 Corinthians 5:20 where we read, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." Every Christian has been called to be an ambassador of Christ. We all need to pray for one another that we will speak the Word of God with boldness.

Paul concludes the book of Ephesians by saying in Ephesians 6:21-24, "But that you also may know my affairs *and* how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you; whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that you may know our affairs, and *that* he may comfort your hearts. Peace to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace *be* with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." Tychicus was the man who took this letter to Ephesus. He was a faithful and beloved brother in the Lord. Paul said Tychicus would tell them about him and also encourage them.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to stand in the armor of God so that they have the Lord's protection from the tricks of the devil. We also want them to learn to share the Word of God with boldness as they trust in the strength and power of the Lord instead of their own strength. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to stand strong in the Lord.