

Helping Our Children Develop Others Part 2

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 8**

By

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Manual 8**

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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 Why God Made Us Different

In our last topic, we saw that Paul gave us an example by the fact that he chose to do all that he did to bring glory to God. In the same way we saw that we want to give our physical and spiritual children an example for their lives by doing all that we do in our lives to bring glory to God. That will also make it possible for us to invite our children to imitate us just as we imitate Christ. Since Adam and Eve first sinned, we see that there have been conflicts and blame between men and women. Today, we are going to see that God had reasons for making men and women different.

In 1 Corinthians 11:1-3 we read, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered *them* to you. 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 Paul invited the Corinthians to imitate his life because he was imitating the life of Christ. Paul was thankful for the fact that the Corinthians remembered the things that Paul had taught them when he was in the city of Corinth. However, he wanted them to do more than remember what he had said. He encouraged them to keep the traditions just as he had given them to the Corinthians. The word that is translated “keep” means to hold fast to the things that had been taught.

The word that is translated “traditions or ordinances” speaks of the things that have been given by word of mouth or in writing. In 2 Thessalonians 2:15 we read, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” In this verse Paul reminded the Thessalonians of the things that he had taught them. Some of those things had been taught to them directly while Paul was in the city of Thessalonica. Other things had been taught to them in the letter that he had written to them that became the book of I Thessalonians. As a result, Paul was speaking to the Thessalonians about things that eventually became the Word of God. That is also the way that Paul is using the word here in 1 Corinthians. He wanted them to hold fast and obey the things that he had taught that were the Word of God.

In these verses, we see that one of the things that Paul had taught the Corinthians was about headship. A key thing to understand is that headship talks about leadership not superiority. This is made clear by the fact that we are told that the head of Christ is God. In John 6:38 Christ said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Then in John 10:30 Christ said, “I and *My* Father are one.” Christ and the Father are equal but Christ carried out the will of the Father.

Ephesians 5:23 says, “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.” In this verse we also see that the husband is to be the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Then Ephesians also says that Christ is the Savior of the body. Here we see a second thing about headship. Just as Christ is the also the Savior and protector of the church, the husband is to be the protector of the wife. The first failure in the Garden of Eden was when Adam failed to protect his wife from the temptation of Satan since he was standing right there with her.

In 1 Corinthians 11:4-6 we read, “Every man praying or prophesying, having *his* head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with *her* head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.” In these verses, we see that both men and women can pray and prophesy.

Notice that the word used here is prophesy with an “s” and not prophecy with a “c”. Biblical prophecy spelled with a “c” is defined in 2 Peter 1:20-21 where we read, “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.” Both the Old and New Testament prophets gave us the written Word of God and the Bible has been completed because Ephesians 2:20 says that the apostles and prophets are the foundation upon which the church is built. (The most important ministry of the apostles was to give us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ according to Acts 1:21-22.)

Prophesy with an “s” is used primarily to describe sharing what has already been written down in the Word of God. 1 Corinthians 14:31-33 points out that all of the men can prophesy in the church service. Then Titus 2:3-5 says that the older women are to teach the younger women how to apply the Word of God in their daily lives. In the city of Corinth, the women that had their heads shaved or shorn were those women who were prostitutes. Remember that the question in this section is about headship. Since man is created in the image of God, he is to reflect the image of God as he prays or prophesies. Since woman was created from the rib of a man, she is to reflect her recognition of the headship of her husband by having her head covered with her hair. Men and women are both to share the Word of God but they are reflect headship in ways appropriate to each.

This reflection of headship is explained in more detail in the following verses. 1 Corinthians 11:7-10 says, “For a man indeed ought not to cover *his* head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on *her* head, because of the angels.” Here we see that Paul said that men were not to cover their heads because they reflect the glory of God. In contrast, the women are to cover their heads because God made them to be the glory of the man. Then the covering is explained in verses 14 and 15. In those verses we read, “Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering.” Here we see that the covering of a woman is her long hair because that is how she reflects the headship of the man.

Many times people in churches get into disputes about how long or how short the hair of men and women should be. In actual fact when such a conflict develops, the people involved have missed the whole point of the passage. Instead the passage is about showing our submission to the Lord by recognizing the headship of God. One of the things that people can never force another person to do is submit. A person can force someone else to obey but submission is always a choice by the person that chooses to submit. That is why Ephesians 5:21 says, “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.” Then we are given six examples of how we are to submit. Ephesians 5:22-24 tells us why a wife submits to her husband. Then Ephesians 5:25-33 tells us how a husband submits to Christ and to his wife. Ephesians 6:1-3 tell how children submit to their parents. Ephesians 6:4 tells how parents and especially fathers submit to their children. Ephesians 6:5-8 tell how servants or employees submit to their masters. Then Ephesians 6:9 tells how masters show their submission to their servants or employees. When we choose to submit, we have a proper inner attitude and choose to place our full potential at the disposal of another.

As we recognize the headship of God, we should recognize as men and women that God has created us to complete one another. 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 says, “Nevertheless, neither *is* man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. For as woman *came* from man, even so man also *comes* through woman; but all things are from God.” God is the source for both men and women. However, God chose to make both men and women in such a way that when we follow a Biblical pattern that we complete each other. God did this because He

recognized that we have that need for completion in Genesis 2:18 where we read, “And the LORD God said, “*It is* not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Here we see the first thing in the Bible that God said was not good. God wanted Adam to recognize his aloneness before He created woman so that they could make one another complete as a husband and wife team. However, there was a need for one to have the headship and God gave Adam that responsibility which he failed to take when Eve was tempted.

Since the only women that shaved their heads in Corinth were prostitutes, that is why God asked in 1 Corinthians 11:13-15, “Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for *her* hair is given to her for a covering.” Here we see that God said that it is a glory for a woman to have long hair. In contrast, long hair does not do the same thing for a man.

However, Paul went on to say in 1 Corinthians 11:16, “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor *do* the churches of God.” The word that is translated “contentious” speaks of a person that is fond of strife. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that a contentious person does not bring glory to God and contentious people in the church will not bring glory to God. Instead we are to help both men and women learn to recognize the ultimate headship of God and realize that we are to serve Him in all things. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others why God has made men and women different so that they complete each other, we realize that people will only fully appreciate these differences as they learn to recognize that Christ is the Head of the church and that the Father is the Head of Christ. It is as we work under the Headship of Christ and the Father that we realize that Christ has made us different so that we can effectively work together in unity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your others understand why Christ made us different.

Remembering the Death of the Lord

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our children understand that God made men and women different so that they can complete one another and work together in unity. Today, we are going to see why we are to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of the death of Christ. We are to help them understand that this very important remembrance is to be done in such a way that it will bring glory to Christ. The Corinthians had many problems in their communion service that meant that they were not bringing glory to Christ. We want to help our children learn how to help others truly bring glory to Christ as they remember His death.

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-19 we read, “Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.” The Corinthian Christians were coming together as a church to remember the death of Christ. This coming together was actually called a love feast because they had communion as a part of a meal shared together. However, Paul said that he could not praise them for coming together to remember the death of Christ because of what they were doing when they came together for a communion service. Instead of having the best motives for remembering the Lord, they were coming to the love feast with evil motives.

First, their relationships toward one another as Christians were not right. There were divisions between the Christians. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 says, “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 communion service was not reminding them of the unity of the body of Christ because as they came together their lives were filled with envy, strife and divisions. Many churches today have similar conflicts because the Christians in those churches are walking in sin instead of walking in fellowship with the Lord and with one another. We want to help our children learn how to help Christians learn to forgive one another so that they walk in unity.

The word that is translated “factions” spoke of a group of people that were following their own ideas or opinions instead of following the Word of God. This word is most commonly translated by the word sect. Acts 15:5 says, “But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses.” Here we see that some of the Christians in the church at Jerusalem had believed but continued to follow the rules of the Pharisees. These Jewish believers wanted to force the Gentile Christians to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses.

This was the very teaching that Paul had refuted as he wrote the book of Galatians. Paul wrote in Galatians 3:13-14, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Paul told the Galatians that Christ had taken our curse to set the Gentiles free so that we could enjoy the blessing of Abraham and receive the Holy Spirit by faith at the moment of salvation. Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to understand that sects that approve those who follow the ideas of men do not bring unity in the body of Christ. The same is true today.

Then 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 says, “Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.” The love feast was to show the unity of the body of Christ. However, in Corinth it showed the selfishness of the Christians. Some were eating the meal before the other Christians arrived so that they could get the best food. Their goal was to satisfy their own hunger even if no food was left for the Christians who were slaves that could not get to the service as soon as the others. Others were using the communion service to become drunk.

Paul said that the actions of the rich Corinthians actually brought shame on the church of God. Paul said that if they wanted to eat all their own food that they should eat their food at home instead of bringing it to the love feast and then not sharing with others. Their actions also caused those who were slaves and had nothing to experience shame. As a result, Paul said as he concluded this section in 1 Corinthians 11:33-34, “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” We want to help our children learn to share these instructions regarding any meal that a church would eat together. They are to wait for the poor so that the poor can also share in the dinner. They are to eat at home before they come if they are so hungry that they feel that they cannot wait and share with others. Paul made it clear that he could not approve of the actions of those who were thinking only of themselves.

After telling the Corinthians about their sinful actions that they needed to change, Paul went on to tell the Corinthians how to remember the death of the Lord. 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 says, “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” Paul says that he received these instructions directly from the Lord. This would have happened during the time that Paul was out in the dessert of Arabia. Galatians 1:15-17 says, “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 are reminded that Paul received three years of personal instruction from the Lord so that he would know how to share the Gospel with the Gentiles without adding any of the rules of the Pharisees.

Christ shared with Paul exactly what He had done the night that the disciples celebrated the first communion service just a few hours before Christ was betrayed. Christ told how he had taken the bread, given thanks to the Father, broken the bread and gave it to the disciples. Then Christ told the disciples in advance what was going to happen to Him the next day. Christ said that the bread was a symbol of His body that would be crucified or broken for them. Christ said that we are eat this bread to remember Him and why He died for us. In the same way, we want to help our children understand so clearly why Christ was crucified that they can explain the purpose of Christ's death clearly to others. We also want to help them realize the importance of remembering Christ.

Then we go on to read in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26, “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.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.” We see that Christ did the same thing after the supper. This means that Christ took the cup, blessed it and then passed it to His disciples to drink.

Christ also explained the purpose for drinking the juice from the cup. Christ said that the cup was the New Covenant in His blood. Throughout the Old Testament sacrifices were offered as a covering for sin. Each year on the Day of Atonement the high priest took blood into the Holy of Holies. Hebrews 9:7 says, "But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance." The high priest first offered blood as a covering for his own sin and then he offered more blood as a covering for the sins of the people. However, that blood could never take away sin.

That is why John the Baptist introduced Christ in John 1:29 by saying, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Christ came to take away our sin. Hebrews 9:12 says, "Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Christ offered His blood once for all to take away sin.

In communion we also remember that His one sacrifice also makes it possible for us to serve God. Hebrews 9:14 says, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Here we see one of the other things that we remember when we have a communion service and observe the death of Christ. We see that communion is to be a reminder to our conscience of the fact that our dead works have been forgiven and cleansed and that we are now free to serve the living God. Here we see that communion also reminds us of the fact that we have now been given freedom so that we can have the privilege to serve the Lord without guilt regardless of any sins that we have committed in the past. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children understand the forgiveness of sin and this freedom to serve God.

3.

Understanding the Importance of Self Examination

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our children understand why we remember the death of the Lord. We saw that the death of Christ on the cross and the shedding of His blood for us is what made it possible for us to receive forgiveness of sin. We saw that Paul rebuked the Christians in Corinth because by their actions they were committing sin and their sinful actions did not show the unity of the body of Christ at all. We also saw that communion is to be a time to remember that Christ wants us to have a clear conscience so that we can enjoy the privilege that we have been given to serve God without guilt. Today, we will see that we also want our children to understand why it is important to examine our lives so that we can enjoy this privilege that God has given us.

In 1 Corinthians 11:27 we are given this warning, “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” The word that is translated “an unworthy manner” means to share in the communion service with a wrong attitude or with unconfessed sin in our hearts. That is why it is always important to have a time of self examination before we participate in a communion service.

Self examination will cause us to deal with any sin that is hindering our fellowship with Christ or with other Christians. Since the roots always determine the fruit, we need to especially examine our lives to see if we have either of the two negative roots that are 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.” If we allow a root of bitterness to remain in our life it will cause us to have an unforgiving attitude toward others. A root of bitterness will produce the fruit of the flesh instead of the fruit of the Spirit.

A second negative root is mentioned in I Timothy 6:10 where we read, “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 this root can cause people to stray from the faith because of their greediness. The word “pierced” means to torture one’s soul with sorrows. A root of the love of money will cause a person to experience torture in their soul and much sorrow. In contrast, I Timothy 6:6-8 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.” This is why it is very important to examine our lives for either one of these roots before each communion service so that our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit.

Once we have confessed any sinful roots in our lives, then we need to examine our lives and confess any unconfessed sins. In 1 John 1:9 we are promised, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” We want to help our children understand that as we confess any sins that are unconfessed that God is faithful to forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We want to help them understand that God is just to forgive and cleanse us because of the fact that Christ paid for that sin by shedding His blood on the cross and the Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment by raising Christ from the dead.

Many of the Corinthians were not experiencing the joy of coming to the remembrance of the body and blood of Christ with clean hands and a pure heart. That is why Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:28-30, “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink

of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep.” This is why it is so important to have a time of self examination before each communion service. Then we can remember what Christ has done as we come to remember Him with clean hands and a pure heart. We want to show our children by our example that we take time to examine our own lives before each communion service so that our lives are pure before the Lord as we eat the bread and drink the cup.

We do not want our physical and spiritual children to follow the negative example of the Corinthian Christians and eat and drink in an unworthy manner. We see that God said that their choice to eat in an unworthy manner was having a great effect in their lives. God says that a person who drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself. The person who is not a Christian is already facing eternal judgment. However, the word translated judgment is also used to refer to Christians. In 1 Peter 4:16-17 we read, “Yet if *anyone suffers* as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time *has come* for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what will *be* the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” Here we see that this word is used to speak of the discipline that God brings on the church or the individual Christian for the purifying of our lives.

In 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 we see that Paul is pointing out the consequences for Christians when we treat the sufferings and death of Christ for our sins as though His death means little or nothing. It is that death that paid the penalty for our sin. To have disrespect by remembering the death of Christ when we know that we have unconfessed sin in our lives is an action that shows we have very little love for Christ and the penalty that He paid for our sins by His death. As a result, we see that Christ may bring three different forms of discipline. The word translated “weak” means feeble or without strength. The word that is translated “sickly” speaks of physical sickness. The word that is translated “sleep” is a word that is used to speak of the death of a Christian. The word is used four times in 1 Corinthians 15 and three times in I Thessalonians 4:13-15 to speak of the death of Christians. As a result, we see that the discipline of the Corinthian Christians included physical weakness, sickness and even physical death.

That is why 1 Corinthians 11:31-32 goes on to say, “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” Here we see that if we examine our own lives and confess our sins that we do not need to fear that it will be necessary for Christ to discipline us for our sin. If we choose not to examine our lives and confess our sins, we will experience the discipline of the Lord. However, we do not need to fear that we will be judged with the world. Romans 8:1 says, “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” The fear of eternal judgment for the Christian has been removed.

Based on the fact that many of the Corinthians had experienced some form of discipline from the Lord for their disrespect of the Lord and of one another, Paul went on to encourage the Corinthians to show their respect both for the Lord and for the Christian slaves. 1 Corinthians 11:33-34 says, “Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” First, Paul spoke to them about the way to show respect for the Christian slaves. Since, the slaves could not come to the love feast until they had finished the work that was required by their masters, Paul told the other Christians to wait until the slaves arrived before they had their love feast.

Here we see that one of the ways that we show disrespect for the Lord is by showing disrespect

for other Christians especially the poor. James 2:5-9 says, "Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Do not the rich oppress you and drag you into the courts? Do they not blaspheme that noble name by which you are called? If you really fulfill *the* royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors." We want to help our children develop a great respect and concern for the poor by our own example. As they see the concern that we have for the poor, they will develop the same concern. Then they will be able to provide an example that will help other Christians learn to show that same respect to the poor.

Paul also told the Christians in Corinth that if they were really hungry that they should eat at home before they came to the love feast so that they would not dishonor the Lord by eating so much food that they did not leave food for some of the other people that were at the love feast. Here we see that Christ wanted the Corinthian Christians to learn to share with others instead of have a greedy attitude that caused them to think only about their own desires. Paul said in Philippians 2:4-8 that we should follow the example of Christ. Those verses say, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross." As we show our children by our example the importance of being concerned for others, they will also learn to have that same concern.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to remind themselves to examine their own lives each time they come to a communion service. In this way we are showing them how to really show respect and love for Christ in the communion service. May the Lord richly bless you as you provide an example for your children to follow.

Learning Why Christ Gives Us Different Spiritual Gifts

In the first eleven chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul talked to the Corinthians about their problems that they were having because of sin in their lives in their relationships with one another. The Corinthians also had problems related to their understanding of their spiritual gifts and how to serve and worship the Lord. Paul began to talk about those topics as we come to 1 Corinthians 12. Today, we will be looking at the first of several topics that demonstrate how to practice the unity and ministry that we have in Christ as Christians. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand many practical ways that we show this unity and ministry in Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 we read, “Now concerning spiritual *gifts*, brethren, I do not want you to be ignorant: You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed, and no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” The Corinthian Christians had been saved out of idol worship. In chapter 10 Paul explained that they did not worship the Lord the same way that they had worshiped demons. 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 say, “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons.” As a result, Paul had to explain that godly service and demonic service are also very different because the way that the Corinthian Christians were serving the Lord showed that they did not understand this.

Paul began by explaining what they did when they worshiped idols as Gentiles. The word that is translated “carried away” was usually translated to lead away and was usually used of a prisoner being led away to trial or to death. This word is used several times to speak about the way that they led Christ first to be tried and later to be crucified. Mark 14:53 says, “And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes.” Then Matthew 27:31 says, “And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.” Paul said that when the Corinthians were still following idols that they were being led away to death by demons. Paul wanted the Corinthian Christians to understand the clear contrast between worshiping Christ and worshiping demons.

Paul said that anyone speaking by the Spirit of God could not call Jesus accursed. It is possible that some of the Corinthians who claimed to be Christians were deceiving the Corinthian Christians by saying that they were speaking by the Spirit of God when they said that Jesus was accursed. Paul makes it clear here that any person who says that Jesus was accursed was not a true believer. Those who were saying that Jesus is Lord were true Christians that were speaking by the Holy Spirit. Here we see that because of their lack of spiritual maturity that many of the Corinthian Christians could not discern between false teachers and true teachers. Since the Ephesians also came out of a background of idol worship, Paul said in Ephesians 4:14, “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 Paul used for children in Ephesians 4:14 is the same word that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 where it is translated “babes” and speaks of young children that cannot speak clearly or toddlers. That was why Paul had to make it clear to the Corinthians that they could not worship the true and living God in the same way that they worshiped idols or demons. A

true teacher will say that Jesus is Lord because He will be led by the Holy Spirit instead of speaking through demonic influence. We will see that Paul actually takes three chapters to explain how this difference affects every area of Christian service.

He begins this explanation by saying in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.” The word that is translated “diversities or differences” is used three times in these verses and means differences. These are the only uses of this word in the New Testament. First we see that there are different kinds of spiritual gifts. However, all true spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit. This reminds us of the fact that all true spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit and cannot come from demonic spirits. Spiritual gifts are given to each Christian at the moment of salvation and their purpose is to help us build up other Christians. 1 Peter 4:10 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” Here we see that we are to use our gift or gifts to serve others.

Second, we see that there are different kinds of ministries given to each Christian. We also see that the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of any ministry that we are given. 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.” Every Christian is now free to serve. However, we are to carry out that service through love.

Third, we see that in our service for the Lord that we will have different activities or ways that we serve but they are all given by God. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 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.” Here we see that each Christian has received at least one gift. If our gift is a speaking gift, we are to speak the very Word of God. If our gift is a serving gift, we are to serve in the ability which God supplies. The purpose of all gifts, ministries and ways of carrying out those ministries is to bring glory to God through the way that Christ works in our lives.

Paul carefully defined the purpose of spiritual gifts as he wrote to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 says, “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit *of all*: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” Here we see that spiritual gifts are not given to us for our own benefit. Instead the Holy Spirit gives each Christian one or more spiritual gifts for the benefit of all Christians so we are to use our gift to serve others.

The word of wisdom is a speaking gift that helps a person to understand and apply the Word of God so that the one with this gift can help Christians make progress in their growth to spiritual maturity. The word of knowledge is a speaking gift that helps a person to discover through study the full meaning of the text, context, words, phrases, related passages and truths and then help provide that understanding to others. The gift of faith is different than saving faith and speaks of the ability to trust God in difficult and demanding ways in spite of overwhelming obstacles and human impossibilities. Such faith is exercised through persistent prayer.

The gifts of healings and miracles are explained in Hebrews 2:3-4 where we read, “How shall

we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" Here we see that God confirmed the message of the apostles by bearing witness through healings and miracles. James 5:13-16 explains that God hears and answers the prayers of the elders for healing today but that is not the gifts of healings or miracles mentioned here but God answering the prayers of those who serve Him.

The technical gift of prophecy is the gift that was given to the prophets as they gave us the written Word of God. 2 Peter 1:21 says, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit." The Lord also gives some people great ability to speak forth the Word of God that is already written down. We see that Apollos had this gift as Acts 18:28 says, "For he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." The gift of discerning of spirits is the special ability to recognize those ideas, philosophies and teachings which are not in agreement with the Bible but have their source in Satan. This gift helps people to correct these false teachings with the Word of God.

God gives some Christians a gift to easily learn various languages so that they can share the Word of God with people of other languages. He gives other Christians the gift to accurately translate the Word of God into other languages. All of these gifts and others are given by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts that He gives to each person according to the will of God so that every Christian is gifted to serve the Lord. This is what helps to give every Christian a purpose in life because every Christian is given one or more gifts so that we can serve others and make our lives count for eternity. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand and explain the purpose of spiritual gifts, we equip them to serve other Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that God gave them spiritual gifts to serve others.

Learning the Meaning of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

In our last topic, we saw that each Christian has different gifts, different ministries and different ways of working. That means that no two Christians do things exactly the same way. The reason for that is due to the fact that the Lord has a different ministry for every Christian. As we each yield our lives to the Lord, we will see that He works through our lives in a way that is different from any other Christian because He has prepared a unique ministry for each of us as Christians. Today, we are going to learn how to help our physical and spiritual children explain the meaning of the baptism of the Holy Spirit and see why the Spirit makes each one of us unique.

In 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 we read, “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also *is* Christ. 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.” In our physical body we have many different parts or members. This includes things like arms, legs, fingers ears and many other parts. In the same way we see that we are all different in the body of Christ. 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.” Christ is one body but because there are many different Christians His body has many different parts.

We also see how each person becomes a part of the body of Christ. We see that the Holy Spirit baptizes each person into the body of Christ. This happens at the moment of salvation. To fully understand what this means we need to understand the difference between the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 3:11-12 says, “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. His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” We see three different kinds of baptism in these two verses. First, is the baptism of John by which a person showed that he believed the message of John and had repented of his sin.

The second baptism in these verses is the baptism with the Holy Spirit. We see that John promised that Christ would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. That meant that Christ would place the Holy Spirit in each Christian at the moment of salvation. In John 14:16-18 Christ told the disciples, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” Here we see that Christ made it clear that He would baptize us with the Holy Spirit. This happens at the moment of salvation. The third baptism in Matthew 3:11-12 is the baptism of eternal judgment in unquenchable fire for all those who reject Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 12:13 we have the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Here we see that it is the Holy Spirit who places us in the body of Christ, the church. This baptism also happens at the moment of salvation. This baptism makes us one in Christ. This happens whether we are Jews or Greeks (Gentiles). This happens whether we are slaves or free. Galatians 3:27-28 says, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ

Jesus.” This is the result of the fact that as we saw in the previous paragraph that we all received the Holy Spirit in our lives at the moment of salvation.

We all share the same Holy Spirit so we are all united as one in Christ. This is why 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 are to have the attitudes mentioned in these verses in order to maintain that unity. When Christians are not experiencing true unity, each Christian needs to examine his or her own life to make certain that there is no sin in his or her life that is destroying that unity. When there is disunity, confession of wrong attitudes by the various Christians is the basis for restoring and maintaining that unity.

As Christians we need to realize that we are to learn how to function as one body. 1 Corinthians 12:14-15 says, “For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body?” Here we are reminded that the body of Christ is made up of many different parts. Christ is the One who chooses what ministries He has for each one of us. The Holy Spirit gives us the particular gifts that will make it possible to carry out those ministries. The Father gives each of us different activities so that all of the work of the Lord is completed.

The person who is like a foot is not to feel that he or she is not a part of the body because he or she is not a hand. This reminds us of the fact that the Lord designed each Christian for a particular kind of ministry. The Lord gives each of us the things that we need to carry out the ministry that He has designed for us. We are not to be upset because someone else has a different ministry than we have. In the same way we are not to be upset because we do not have the gifts that are needed for that ministry. Instead we need to ask the Lord to show us the ministry that He has for us. Then we can rejoice because we are able to do exactly what the Lord has designed us to do. As we yield to the Lord and carry out the service that He has designed us to do, our lives will be filled with joy.

We go on to read in 1 Corinthians 12:16-18, “And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body *were* an eye, where *would be* the hearing? If the whole *were* hearing, where *would be* the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.” Here we see that our physical bodies have many different parts. Each part is necessary for our human bodies to function effectively. We need our feet but we also need our hands. We need our eyes but we also need our ears. We do not expect our ears to do the walking or our feet to do the seeing. Instead in our human body we use each part of the body to do what it was designed to do.

It is the same way in the body of Christ. Uniformity means that everyone does the same thing at the same time. When a group of soldiers are marching and the officer in charge says, “Right face” the soldiers all turn right. In contrast, unity means that every part works together by doing the thing that they were designed to do. In the human body, the eye sees, the ears hear, the nose smells and the feet walk. That is exactly the reason why Christ made every Christian different. We have all been designed to do different things in the body of Christ.

That is why 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 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.” If the Holy Spirit has given us speaking gifts, then we are to speak the very words of God and not give our own opinions. If the Holy Spirit has given us serving gifts, then

we are to serve in the ability which God has supplied in our lives. We are not to seek our own glory. Instead we are to serve the body so that God is gloried by whatever we say or do.

We also see that our physical body would not function properly if the whole body were an eye, an ear or a nose. We need every one of those parts of the body because each part has a different thing to do to cause our human body to work effectively. In the same way the church needs the ministry of every Christian to work effectively. Mary anointed the feet of Christ with precious ointment. Judas complained and said the money should have been given to the poor instead. Christ responded in Mark 14:8-9, "She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." What Judas saw as a waste, Christ saw as a message to the entire world about the importance of the ministry of each individual Christian.

The action of Mary explains why verse 18 says, "But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased." God has a perfect plan to complete in the world. That plan includes the ministry of every Christian. For that reason God has made each of us as Christians different from any other Christian. The Lord gives us different spiritual gifts, a heart for different ministries, different abilities, different personalities and different experiences in life to prepare each one of us for the particular ministry that the Lord has prepared us to do. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to others that the baptism of the Holy Spirit means that each Christian has an important ministry. This will help other Christians to understand that God has given them a purpose in life that will give eternal value and meaning to their lives. God wants all Christians to understand that the Holy Spirit has made them unique because the Lord has a different ministry for every Christian that will give each one great joy. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to explain the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Learning that Every Christian Is Important

In our last topic, we saw that the Holy Spirit baptizes every Christian at the moment of salvation by placing each person in the body of Christ at the moment that person becomes a Christian. We also saw that it is important to help each of our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit to others. The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit work together to give us different ways of working, different ministries and different spiritual gifts to equip each Christian to carry out the ministry that God has designed for each Christian. Today, we are going to see why we want to help our children understand that every Christian is important.

In 1 Corinthians 12:19-20 we read, “And if they *were* all one member, where *would* the body *be*? But now indeed *there are* many members, yet one body.” In the physical body if every part of the body was a leg, we would not have a body. Instead we would have many legs that were useless because they were not able to function as a part of a body. It is the same way in the church. We cannot all do the same thing or we would not be functioning as a body. For that reason God has made each of us different so that each one of us can carry out the ministry that the Lord has created us to do.

One of the key things that we want to help our children learn to explain to others is that every Christian is important and God has designed a ministry for each one. That is why 1 Corinthians 12:21-22 says, “And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.” Here we see that no Christian is to feel that the ministry of some other Christian is not important. In the physical body the eye does not say that it does not need the hand. In the same way we need every Christian to realize the importance of the ministry of every other Christian. We show a wrong attitude if we think that the ministry of another Christian is not important.

Some Christians are physically weak and not able to do things that involve the use of their physical body. That does not mean that they are unimportant. In fact in the sight of God that person may have a very important ministry. A Christian may be physically limited or very advanced in age. However, that person may spend many hours in prayer every day. In Luke 2:36-38 we read, “Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman *was* a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served *God* with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Here we see that Anna was older and so she served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

1 Corinthians 12:23-25 goes on to say, “And those *members* of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable *parts* have greater modesty, but our presentable *parts* have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that *part* which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but *that* the members should have the same care for one another.” Some Christians may carry out those ministries that most Christians do not even notice. However, God knows how each Christian serves Him and such individuals may be some of the ones who receive the greatest honor when we get to heaven.

Other parts of our body are not even seen. We do not even see our physical heart but without it our body would be dead. In the same way, the Lord has given some Christians ministries that are never seen by other Christians. We see that God says that He will give greater honor to those parts that do not receive honor from others. We see that God has a goal for the body of Christ. The word that is translated “schism” means division. It is the word that is translated divisions in 1 Corinthians 1:10 where we read, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Paul had a great concern to see the Corinthians stop those things that were bringing divisions between various Christians. Instead we see that Paul said that he wanted to see the Christians perfectly joined together.

That is why we are to have a great care and concern for every Christian. 1 Corinthians 12:26-27 says, “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with *it*; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with *it*. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.” Here we see that anytime that something causes one Christian to suffer that the whole church is affected. When we see any person suffering in the body we are to suffer with that person by praying for that person. Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” We are also to share in the suffering of those who weep by weeping with them and praying for them. In the same way, when a Christian is honored, we are to rejoice with that person and thank the Lord for the way that He has worked through the life of that person.

In our physical body, if we break a toe, we experience pain that affects every part of our body. In the same way, when something affects another Christian, we see that it also affects the rest of the body. That is why we are told that we are to continually remember that we are all a part of the body of Christ and need to have a great concern for each other. We see an illustration of this principle in Acts 11:27-29 where we read, “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea.” Here we see that the disciples in Antioch had a great concern to share in the suffering that was going to happen to the Christians in Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

As we help our children learn how to help others develop a great concern for other Christians, we are showing them how to function as the body of Christ. This was an important lesson for the Christians in Corinth because there were many divisions in the church at Corinth. In the same way, it is also an important lesson for Christians today because we still see many divisions. The night before He was crucified, Christ told the disciples 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.” Here we see that the thing that will cause the world to recognize the love of Christ is to see the love of Christians for one another.

We go on to read that God is the One who gives those who minister to the church or in the church their various ministries. In 1 Corinthians 12:28-31 we read, “And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. *Are* all apostles? *Are* all prophets? *Are* all teachers? *Are* all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.” We saw in an earlier topic why apostles and prophets are listed first.

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 were to be eyewitnesses of the resurrection. Without the resurrection there would be no church. The 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 as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Without the Word of God, we would have nothing to guide us and show us how to help each Christian develop the ministry the Lord has given them.

We also see that two additional gifts are mentioned here that were not mentioned in the earlier part of the chapter. One of these is the gift of helps. The gift of helps is similar to the gift of serving in that it speaks of helping and serving others. However, it is different that the gift of serving in the sense that the word translated “helps” means to take the burden off someone else and place it on oneself. This is often one of those unnoticed gifts. Yet it is very important because it frees others for ministry by relieving them of those things that could be a burden and hindrance to their ministry.

The second gift is the gift of administration. This word comes from the same root word as the word for the pilot of a ship. It has the thought of one who steers the ship and guides it to the harbor. This gift of administration speaks of those who have been given the special ability to make wise decisions to motivate, to mobilize and to delegate responsibility to help a group of Christians. This helps the body to accomplish a purpose, fulfill an objective or reach a goal that they have been led of the Lord to establish. This is also an important gift that often is not recognized but helps the body of Christ function effectively. We want to show our children how to help all Christians realize that they are important in the body of Christ. Then our children will be able to help others learn to serve the Lord effectively and the body will function properly. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help other Christians understand that the Lord wants to use their ministry for His glory.

Learning What Godly Love Means

In our last topic, we saw that every Christian is important and every Christian has been gifted by the Lord for the ministry that the Lord has for each Christian. However, it is important to understand that those gifts will not be effective unless we learn to use our spiritual gifts with love. That is why we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example the importance of ministering in love so that they can follow our example and also become an example to others of the importance of ministering in love. That will be the focus of our topic Today,.

In 1 Corinthians 13:1-2 we read, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have *the gift of prophecy*, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” First, we see that it is possible to hurt others by what we speak. Paul uses his own life to illustrate the importance of love in all that he did. He asked if it would mean anything if he could speak all of the languages on earth and even the language of heaven if he spoke those languages without love. He said that if he could speak all of those languages but did it without love that what he said would be like two pieces of metal banging together.

Second, Paul said that if he had several spiritual gifts including faith so that he could remove mountains that it would mean nothing if he did not have love. Here we see that we will misuse our spiritual gifts if we do not have love. This is a key lesson to help our children understand. The purpose of our spiritual gifts is to serve one another in love. However, if we are not led by the love of Christ, we will use our spiritual gifts to try and get our own desires met. Philippians 2:2-4 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. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Spiritual gifts are given to us so that we can serve others and not so that we can satisfy our own interests.

Third, Paul said that even if he served other Christians but served them without love that it would be no benefit. 1 Corinthians 13:3 says, “And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.” In this verse we see that even if a person gave away everything that he had to feed the poor that it would mean nothing if it was done without love. A few years after Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians the Roman government started burning Christians tied to a stake or pole because of their faith. Paul said that even dying such a terrible death would mean nothing if it was not done in love. These three illustrations make it very clear that any service for the Lord must be done in love if it is going to have any value. That is why 1 John 4:18 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 are either driven by the fear of people or we are led by the love of Christ. Only when we are led by the love of Christ will our service be effective.

That is why it is very important to help our children understand the love of Christ so that their lives will be an example of that love as they serve others. His love is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a where we read, “Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.” In this definition of the love we

see that godly love is two things, love avoids eight things and love does five things. We will look at each of these things in more detail.

First of all we see that love is patient. The word that is translated “patient” means to be longsuffering as we bear the offences and injuries of others. 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.” In this verse the word is translated longsuffering and shows that the Lord is waiting a long time to bring judgment for sin because of His desire that none would perish. This word is used three times in James 5:7-8 and where we read, “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See *how* the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.” Here we see that we are to continue to be patient and leave all judgment to the Lord when He comes. We see that we want to show our children by our example that we have chosen to be patient until the Lord comes to take us to heaven by not trying to judge anyone ourselves.

Second, we see that love is kind. The word that is translated “kind” means to gracious, useful and serving. We see the kindness of God explained 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 the people that are unthankful and evil. We see in Ephesians 4:32 that we are to show this same kindness. That verse says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Here we see that we want to show our children how to be gracious to others and to be useful to the Lord by serving others in their lives.

We also see that love avoids eight things. First, love is not jealous. The word that is translated “jealous” means to burn with zeal and can be used in either a good or a evil sense. Here it is used in an evil sense and speaks of desiring strongly what someone else has. Jealousy can also have a more evil form where a person desires evil to happen to someone else. That is the way Stephen used the word when he talked about the brothers of Joseph. Acts 7:9 says, “And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him.” The brothers were so jealous because Jacob favored Joseph that they sold him into slavery. Second, we see that love does not brag. The word that is translated “brag” means to boast about one’s self. We want to show our children how to follow the example of Christ by humbling ourselves. Christ told us how we become great in Mark 10:43-44 when He said, “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.” The opposite of bragging is becoming a servant or slave to others where we help them develop their God given potential instead of talking about ourselves.

Third, we see that love is not arrogant. The word that is translated “arrogant” means to be puffed up or be proud of what we can do. 1 Corinthians 8:1 says, “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.” Here we see that knowledge makes a person arrogant or proud. In contrast, love builds up others. Fourth, we see that love does not behave rudely. The word that is translated “behave rudely” means to behave unbecomingly. This word is also used in 1 Corinthians 7:36 where we read, “But if any man thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virgin, if she is past the flower of youth, and thus it must be, let him do what he wishes. He does not sin; let them marry.” We want to help our children learn not to behave improperly or rudely in their relationships with others.

Fifth, we see that love does not demand its own way. The word that is translated “demand its own way” means to crave or demand something from someone. Paul gives us an example to follow when he said in 1 Corinthians 10:31-33, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.” We want to show our children how to seek the profit or benefit of all and not demand their own way. Sixth, we see that love is not irritable. The word that is translated “irritable” means to be angry or provoked at other people. We are to be angry at sin but we are to love the sinner that is committing the sin. Acts 17:16 uses this word when it says, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.” Here we see that Paul was angry to see a city filled with idols and it caused him to share the Gospel with all who would listen because he loved the sinners. We want to show our children how to follow his example.

Seventh, we see that love thinks no evil. The word that is translated “thinks” is a bookkeeping term and means to keep a record of the evil that others have done to us. 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, “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.” As Christians, God does not keep a record of our sins. In the same way, we are not to keep a record of the sins of others. Eighth, we see that love does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. To “rejoice in unrighteousness” means to talk or to boast about sin. Gossip is a common form of rejoicing in the sins of others. We want to talk about the truth instead of talking about the sins of others.

We see that love does five things. Love bears all things. We will protect the sinner from harm by not gossiping. Love believes all things. We will give the other person the benefit of the doubt and not accuse. Love hopes all things. We will look forward with hope to the salvation of others. Love endures all things. We will never give up loving another person and praying for their salvation. Love never fails. Finally we see that love will last for all eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as your model for your physical and spiritual children by your example the meaning of godly love.

Learning Why Godly Love Endures

In our last topic, we looked at the Biblical meaning of godly love. We saw that love is patient with others and that love is kind to others. We also saw that godly love avoids eight things. Finally we concluded by seeing that godly love does five things. We concluded our last topic by saying that love never fails. Today, we are going to see that everything else will one day come to an end but that love will never come to an end. Instead love will last for all eternity because love will never fail.

In 1 Corinthians 13:8 we read, “Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.” In this verse we see that love is contrasted with three things. Each of these three things will come to an end but love will never come to an end. In this verse we are reminded that these and all spiritual gifts will come to an end and will not last for eternity. The word that is translated prophecy is used 19 times in the New Testament. In its technical sense, 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 prophecies of Scripture were given to men as the Holy Spirit moved them.

From Revelation 22:18-19 we know that nothing new is to be added to the Word of God after the book of Revelation. Those verses say, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book.” As a result, we know that no one today can add anything to the Bible.

However, we are commanded to study and obey what has already been written in the Bible. 1 Thessalonians 5:20 says, “Do not despise prophecies.” In addition, we also see that we are to speak the written Word of God to others to help others grow. 1 Corinthians 14:22 says, “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.” In the book of Acts we see that tongues were a sign to the unbelieving Jews. This even included Jewish believers that did not believe that the Gospel was for the Gentiles. Acts 11:17-18 says, “If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” Here we see that we are to speak the Word of God to help Christians grow. When prophecy is used in this sense, 1 Corinthians 14:3 tells us, “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.”

However, the day will come when we are face to face with the Lord for eternity and there will be no need for prophecy. Paul said that tongues will cease in and of themselves because once the Word of God was complete there was no longer a need to keep showing the unbelieving Jews that the message of the Gospel was from the Lord. In addition, the day will come when the various languages of the world will cease and what happened at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9 because of sin will be reversed and we will all understand one another. Knowledge will also vanish away and not be eternal because Revelation 22:4 says, “They shall

see His face, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.” When we get to eternity we will know all things.

1 Corinthians 13:9-10 say, “For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away.” Paul said that we know the will of God in the present day through the Scriptures. However, when we reach eternity, the perfect has come and there will not be a need for what is partial.

Paul illustrates this in a very interesting way in 1 Corinthians 13:11. That verse says, “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.” The word that is translated “child” speaks of a child who is at an age where he cannot yet speak clearly (a toddler about one or two years old). In three other passages this word is used to describe the Christian that is spiritually immature. Those passages are 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, Ephesians 4:14, and Hebrews 5:11-14. Those passages point out how immature Christians think and act. Here we see that Paul describes his own life when he was a toddler. His speaking was limited. His understanding was limited. His thinking was limited. However, when he became mature he did away with the things of a toddler in his life. Here we see that when we are with the Lord in eternity that our spiritual immaturity will be gone. In these passages we see the following ten characteristics of an immature Christian:

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 - I Cor. 3:2
3. He experiences envy, strife and divisions - 1 Corinthians 3:3
4. His talk, understanding and thinking of spiritual things is limited - I Cor. 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

The Corinthian Christians certainly demonstrated these characteristics in their lives. Just as Paul put away these things as he matured, we want to help our children learn to help struggling Christians mature so that they are able to put these things away in their own lives. The word that is translated “put away” means to cause to cease. Struggling Christians will see these things begin to cease in their lives as they learn to yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit. As they learn to yield moment by moment, their lives begin to be led by the love of Christ instead of continuing to be driven by the fear of people. As they learn to yield, they become mature in their Christian lives.

1 Corinthians 13:12 says, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.” Today, we have the blessing of having the New Testament which was not true at the time that Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Through the New Testament we see many things about Christ. 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.” Through the eyes of those who walked with Christ we are able to learn many things about Christ. In addition, Christ promised in John 14:16-17, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” As a result, we have the Holy Spirit living within us to teach us.

In fact Galatians 2:20 also 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.” Here we see that Christ lives in us. However, these ways that we can know Christ are like a foggy mirror compared to the time when we will see Christ face to face.

1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love.” Today, we walk by faith not by sight. We have the same faith as Abraham. Hebrews 11:9-10 says, “By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.” We are looking forward to our eternal home by faith. 2 Corinthians 5:6-8 says, “So *we are* always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Here we see that that we must walk by faith now because we do not see Christ face to face. One day we will see face to face and will see Him clearly and will no longer need faith.

Today, we also walk in hope. In fact Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Our confident hope is based on the return of Christ to take us to heaven. Romans 8:24 says, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees?” When Christ takes us to heaven, we will no longer need hope.

However, love is the greatest because love is eternal. In 1 John 4:8-10 we see that love is the character of God so it is eternal. Those verses say, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.” We want to help our children learn to understand and be able to explain the fact that love is the character of God and because of that His love is eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand why love endures forever.

Learning Why It Is Important to Prophesy

In our last topic, we saw that love is eternal. We saw that spiritual gifts are not eternal because they will not be needed in heaven. We also saw that we walk by faith because we have not yet reached heaven where we will see Christ face to face. We also walk in hope as we wait for the return of Christ to take us to heaven so we will not need hope any longer once we are present with Christ. However, love is the character of God so love is eternal and we will enjoy the blessings of His love forever. This is the message that we want to help our children learn to share with others. For that reason it is important to help our children understand why it is important to prophesy.

In 1 Corinthians 14:1 we read, “Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy.” The word that is translated “pursue” means persecute or to seek after eagerly. The second meaning of the word is the meaning that is used in this verse. This is the same way the word is used in 1 Timothy 6:11 where we read, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” Since we want our children to become men and women of God we also want to encourage them to pursue love and the other good things mentioned in this verse.

We are also told to desire spiritual gifts. 1 Corinthians 12:31 says, “But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.” In our last two topics we saw that the more excellent way that is greater than spiritual gifts is love. However, if we understand the purpose of spiritual gifts and carry out that purpose we also should desire them. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 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.” Here we see that we are to use our spiritual gifts to serve one another. If we have a speaking gift, we are to speak the Word of God. If we have a serving gift, we are to serve with the ability that God supplies.

However, we see that we are to especially desire that we may prophesy. We saw in an earlier topic that when prophesy is spelled with an “s” that it means to speak what is already written down in the Word of God. In 1 Corinthians 14:31 we read, “For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” As we share the Word of God with others we see that the Word of God causes people both to learn what God wants them to do and also gives them encouragement in their lives. Hebrews 4:12 tells us why we should help our physical and spiritual children learn to share the Word of God. That verse 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 Word of God is able to accomplish the work of God because the Word is living and powerful.

We also see that as we speak the Word of God that we are to speak the Word in a language that the people to whom we are speaking can understand. 1 Corinthians 14:2 says, “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.” God can understand any language so if we speak in a different language God will still understand. However, the people to whom we are speaking will not understand us and the Word of God will remain like a mystery to them. In fact there was a period of about 1000 years where the people in Europe only heard the Word of God when it

was spoken to them in Latin which most of the people could not understand. As a result, that period was known in Europe as the dark ages.

In contrast 1 Corinthians 14:3 says, “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” Here we see that we do at least three things when we share the Word of God with others. First, the word that is translated “edification” means the act of building up. That is why Romans 14:19 says, “Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another.” We see that we are to make it our goal to build up other Christians. Ephesians 4:15-16 tell us how we build up other Christians when 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 speak the Word of God in love, we are building up other Christians and equipping them to serve the Lord also.

Second, the word translated “exhortation” means instruction from the Word of God that provides encouragement or comfort. In I Timothy 4:13 Paul told Timothy, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Here we see that Timothy was to read the Word, encourage or comfort from the Word and give instruction from the Word. The word is used 6 times in 2 Corinthians 1:3-7 and is translated by the words comfort and consolation. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” Here we see that we are able to comfort and encourage others with the same Word that God has used to bring comfort in our own lives.

Third, the word translated “comfort” means to speak for the purpose of persuading, stimulating or comforting. In I 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, another form of the word is translated comforted as Paul described how he, Silvanus, and Timothy shared the Word of God with the Thessalonians to help them in their spiritual growth. He said that they had been spiritual parents and had shared with the Thessalonians in the same way that a father shares with his children. These three words show that as we help our children to learn to share the Word of God with others that the Lord will use their ministry so that they become spiritual parents to others.

In contrast, the Corinthian Christians were speaking to build up themselves instead of speaking to build up other Christians. 1 Corinthians 14:4 says, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.” Since we have seen that the Corinthian Christians were talking and acting like spiritual toddlers (like children that are only one or two years old), this verse indicates that the Corinthian Christians were controlled by pride by speaking in a childish tongue (this was the singular use of the word) instead of speaking in known languages. Their desire was not to help other Christians. Instead their desire was to make themselves look good. That is not ministry. Instead it is personal pride.

That is why Paul goes on to say in 1 Corinthians 14:5, “I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.” Here we see that Paul used the word tongues or known languages instead of a tongue that could not be understood. The word that is translated “tongues” used in the plural form means a language or dialect used by a particular people distinct from that of other nations. This is the way the word

is used in Acts 2:3-11 where we see a whole variety of known languages mentioned. Acts 2:11 concludes a whole list of languages by saying, “Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” Since Corinth was a seaport where people that came to Corinth often spoke different languages, Paul said that it would be good if they would share the Word of God with these people from other countries in their own language.

However, Paul said that it would be much better if they spoke the Word of God when they spoke to the people of the church at Corinth. The Word of God spoken in their own language would build up the Christians in the church in that city so that they would be equipped to share the Word of God with others including the visitors who visited the seaport of Corinth. He said that if they were going to speak in another language that what they said should be interpreted. Paul explains this further in 1 Corinthians 14:27-28 when he said, “If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” Here we see that if there was not a person that could interpret what was said into the language of the congregation that the person was to keep silent. There was also a limitation on how many could speak in another language.

Paul said that the person who prophesies is greater than the person that speaks in another language because everyone would understand the language of Corinth. Here we see another important lesson. We are not to try and impress people with our ability to speak big words. Instead our concern is to speak and explain the Word of God simply and clearly so that everyone can understand. This is especially important in a church where part of the people have a limited education. As we mentioned in a previous topic, about half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves and many had a limited education. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the Word of God simply and clearly so that even children or people with a limited education can understand. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to speak the Word of God so that others can understand what they teach.

Learning Why It Is Important to Edify Others

In our last topic, we saw that it is important to speak the Word of God so that other people can understand what we are saying. We saw that one of the problems of the Christians in Corinth was that they were trying to build up themselves instead of building up other Christians. Today, we are going to see why it is important for every Christian to learn to build up other Christians. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn both how and why it is important to learn to build up other Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 14:6 we see that Paul had to help the Christians in Corinth understand what was important when the church met together. Paul used himself as an illustration. That verse says, “But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?” Paul said that it would not profit the Christians if he spoke to them in another language unless someone interpreted what he said. Instead of speaking another language Paul pointed out that there were four different ways that he could speak to them in their own language.

First, Paul said that he could benefit the church by revelation. The word translated “revelation” spoke of truth that had been previously unknown. In Galatians 1:11-12 Paul wrote, “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught *it*, but *it came* through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” Galatians 1:17-18 point out the fact that Paul had been given this revelation from Christ in the desert of Arabia. As a result, he could benefit the church if he taught them what Christ had taught him.

Second, Paul said that he could benefit the church by knowledge. Here we see that he could benefit the Christians by sharing with them the knowledge that was known to many of the Christians in other areas. In Romans 15:14 we read, “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.” Here we see that the Christians in Rome had been well taught in the knowledge of Christ and so they were able to teach and admonish each other.

Third, Paul said that he could benefit the church by prophesying. Prophesying is reading and explaining the Word of God that is already written down. Paul knew that he could help the Corinthians grow in their understanding if he explained how Christ fulfilled many of the prophecies in the Old Testament. In fact in 1 Corinthians 14:22 Paul said, “Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe.” In this verse Paul made it clear that any godly teacher can help Christians grow if they will explain how Christ fulfilled various promises in the Old Testament.

Fourth, Paul said that he could benefit the church by teaching. The word that is translated “teaching” in the New Testament speaks of giving instruction to help Christians grow and mature. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” In this verse we see the four basic things that helped the new Christians grow in Jerusalem. These are the basics to help new Christians grow in any church in the world. Those four are the apostles' doctrine (the teachings of Christ to the apostles) and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayer.

After reminding the Christians of the things that he had done to help them grow, Paul went on

the say in 1 Corinthians 14:7-9, “Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle? So likewise you, unless you utter by the tongue words easy to understand, how will it be known what is spoken? For you will be speaking into the air.” Here Paul pointed out that even musical instruments must be played in such a way that those listening can recognize what is being played.

If the trumpet played a mixture of musical notes when soldiers were supposed to hear the music that said they were about to be attacked, they would not prepare for battle and many would be killed. Paul said that the same thing happens when we do not speak words that are easy to be understood. If the words are spoken in another language or the language of the highly educated, most people will not understand what has been said. In fact Paul said that a speaker who uses such words is speaking to the air instead of speaking to the people. Such speech will not do any of the four things that were mentioned in verse six. Instead there will only be confusion.

Paul then said in 1 Corinthians 14:10-11, “There are, it may be, so many kinds of languages in the world, and none of them *is* without significance. Therefore, if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to him who speaks, and he who speaks *will be* a foreigner to me.” Paul made it clear that he recognized that there are many different languages spoken in different parts of the world. In fact every one of those languages is important to the people that speak that language. God gave them that language so that they can communicate with each other. We want to help our children realize that the reason God gave them the ability to speak one or more languages is so that they can clearly explain to others what they have learned about Christ.

Paul then used himself again to illustrate what he meant. He said that if he did not understand the language of a person that was speaking that he would be a foreigner to that person. In the same way that person would be a foreigner to Paul. The word that is translated “foreigner” means a stranger or foreigner who speaks a language not spoken by another. They would not be able to talk to each other because neither one of them would understand the language of the other person. Both people would be speaking a known language. However, they would not be able to understand each other because they did not know the language that was being spoken by the other person. As a result, neither could build up the other person in their spiritual life.

In 1 Corinthians 14:4-5 we saw that our goal should always be to edify the church. Those verses say, “He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification.” When we speak and explain the Word of God in the church, the other Christians will all be built up. If we speak in another language, the other Christians will not be built up unless there is someone who can clearly interpret what we are saying so that they can be built up. This is a reminder to all who speak in the church that we are not speaking to benefit ourselves by receiving the praise of the people for our speaking abilities. Instead we are speaking to the church to build up the people in the church so that they can grow and mature in Christ.

That is why 1 Corinthians 14:12-13 goes on to say, “Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual *gifts*, *let it be* for the edification of the church *that* you seek to excel. Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” The Corinthian Christians were eager to use their spiritual gifts. Here Paul makes a key correction in their thinking. Paul said that instead of being eager to use their spiritual gifts that they should be eager to build up the other

Christians in the church.

Here we see that there is a great difference between seeking personal glory and seeking to carry out godly service for the Lord. A person who wants to show off their spiritual gifts will exercise those gifts in their own strength. Paul warns against this attitude when he says in Philippians 2:3, “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Here we are reminded that such attitudes are really the result of selfish ambition or pride. The Bible always condemns such pride.

In contrast, when a person chooses to use their spiritual gifts to carry out godly service for the Lord, that person will choose to yield to the Lord so that the strength of the Lord can work through his or her life. That means that whatever happens will be done in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of the human strength of that person. In Acts 8:4 we see that when the early Christians fled from persecution in Jerusalem that they depended on the Holy Spirit to work in their lives and through their lives. As a result, Acts 8:4 says, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” We see some of the results of the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives in Acts 9:31 where we read, “Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied.” As we show our physical and spiritual children how to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit instead of their own strength, they will see the Lord build up other Christians and also multiply churches.

We also want to help our children realize that when they have an opportunity to share the Word of God with the people of another language that they need to pray that the Lord will provide someone that can interpret what they are saying into the language of the people to whom they are speaking. In this way the Lord can use them to begin helping Christians who live in other cultures and speak other languages. This will multiply their ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand the importance of edifying others without seeking personal glory.

Learning Why It Is Important to Be Mature in Understanding

In our last topic, we explained why it is important to help our children learn to build up other Christians. We saw that spiritual gifts are not given for self glory. Instead spiritual gifts are given to build up other Christians. That will only happen as we help our children learn to yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can work in their lives and then through their lives. In order to be effective as they explain the Word of God to others, we want to help both our physical and our spiritual children understand why it is important for them to become mature in their spiritual understanding. This will be the focus of our topic today.

Paul uses himself as an illustration as he talks about his prayer life and his singing. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 says, “For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is *the conclusion* then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.” Paul asked what would happen in his life if he were to pray in a language that he did not know or understand. He said that his spirit would be praying but that his understanding would be unfruitful. The word that is translated understanding is used 24 times in the New Testament and is translated by the word mind in 21 of those places. When used of spiritual truth it has the thought of recognizing goodness and hating evil.

For those who do not have faith in Christ, 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 those are unbelieving have their mind and conscience defiled. In contrast, Ephesians 4:22-24 says, “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, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” As Christians, we are able to put on the new man that is the result of becoming a new creation. That is what makes it possible for us to be renewed in the spirit of our mind. That makes it possible to walk in true righteousness and holiness when we are yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Paul said that he did not want to have a mind or understanding that is unfruitful. Instead these verses show us that he wanted to pray with his human spirit and with his mind so that his understanding would be mature. Paul said that the same thing was true when he was singing. That is why Ephesians 5:19-21 says, “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, 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.” We are to pray and to speak or sing in such a way that we know that we are giving thanks to the Lord as we submit to one another.

Paul went on to tell how what we do affects others. 1 Corinthians 14:16-19 says, “Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say? For you indeed give thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.” The word “Amen” means let it be so when spoken by humans. It means it is and it shall be when spoken by God. As a result, if we bless in another language no one else can participate with us in that blessing by saying amen because they do not understand what we are saying.

It is true that we are giving thanks to the Lord but the other people who hear us are not edified because they cannot understand what we are saying. As a result, we are not following the instructions of the Lord to edify others by the things that we do and say. In I Thessalonians 5:9-11 Paul told the Christians in Thessalonica, "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." Here we see that we are to continue to edify one another until Christ takes us to heaven. That is impossible if others cannot even understand what we are saying.

Paul also used himself as an example. Because of the background that Paul had, Paul was able to speak several different languages. However, he said that when speaking to the church that he would rather speak five words that he and the people could understand than ten thousand words that they could not understand. We might put it this way. Paul said that he would rather speak one sentence that everyone could understand than give a two hour message that the people could not understand. Understanding one sentence was more valuable than hearing a two hour sermon. Here we see that Paul felt that he would waste both his time and the time of the people if there was no understanding.

Paul said that the reason why he spoke was to teach others. He felt that if he did not teach others when he spoke to the church that there was no purpose for what he was saying. Here we see an important lesson for our own lives. When we have the opportunity to speak to the church we should remember that our purpose is always to teach and build up others. 1 Corinthians 14:31 says, "For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged." When we share the Word of God with the church, we see that our purpose should be to make certain that every person learns and every person is encouraged. If we do those two things then our ministry to the church will be profitable for all.

We go on to read in 1 Corinthians 14:20-22, "Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature. In the law it is written: "With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me," says the Lord. Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers; but prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe." The word that is translated "children" in these verses speaks of a young child. Paul makes it very clear that we are not to be like a young or little child in our understanding. That is due to the fact that the speaking, the thinking and the understanding of a young child is limited. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says, "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." Paul put away the things of a child when he became a man.

Paul does say that in malice we are to be like a young child. The word that is translated "malice" means evil, wickedness or a desire to injure. Young children will get angry at each other and in a couple of minutes they have forgotten their anger and are busy playing together again. As a result, this points out the fact that we are to quickly forgive others so that we can work together to serve the Lord.

In contrast to being young children in our malice, Paul went on to say that we are to be mature in our understanding. That is why Paul had said that he would rather speak five words that they could understand rather than ten thousand words that they could not understand. The word translated "understanding" is only used in this verse in the New Testament. It means to understand with the heart. Psalm 19:14 says, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer." Here we see that we are to let both the words of our mouth and the understanding in our heart be acceptable to the Lord. We are to have this kind of understanding in our hearts because Luke 6:45 says,

“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” We want to have a heart of understanding so that we can speak what is good to edify others.

In Isaiah 28:11-12 we read, “For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, To whom He said, “This *is* the rest *with which* You may cause the weary to rest,” And, “This *is* the refreshing”; Yet they would not hear.” In that context God warned the people of Israel that he would bring a foreign nation that spoke a language that they did not understand to bring judgment on Israel. God said that even though Assyria would destroy the nation of Israel that the people of Israel still would not listen to what the Lord was telling them.

Here we also see the purpose of tongues in the book of Acts. In every case where tongues are mentioned in the book of Acts, there were Jews present. In Acts 2:12-13 we read the response of the unbelieving Jews, “So they were all amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, “Whatever could this mean?” Others mocking said, “They are full of new wine.” Then in Acts 11:15-18 we see that the Jews who had become Christians did not believe that the Gospel was for the Gentiles, “And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave* us when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could withstand God?” When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” Finally we see that the disciples of John the Baptist spoke in tongues when they received the Holy Spirit as they were actually Old Testament saints who had not heard of the death and resurrection of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children become mature in their understanding.

Learning How to Develop the Ministry of Others

In our last topic, we saw that we are to help our physical and spiritual children become mature in their understanding of the Word of God so that they can build up other Christians. We also saw that God said through Isaiah that tongues (other languages) would be a sign to the unbelieving Jews when the Assyrians came and conquered the nation of Israel. Since that passage was quoted in 1 Corinthians 14, we saw that tongues were also a sign to the unbelieving Jews in the New Testament. In this topic and the next topic we will study the only detailed description of a church worship service in the New Testament. In these topics we will see what Paul told the Corinthian Christians about the proper way to use the church worship service to develop the ministry of one another.

I often ask the question when speaking to church leaders or churches, “When we gather together to worship, who is the audience and who are the participants?” Someone will finally say, “If we are gathering together to worship God, then He is the audience and we are the participants.” These verses show us that there is much more to worship than just singing. In fact true worship is described in John 4:24 where we read, “God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” In order to worship in our human spirit, we must be yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. In order to worship in truth, our worship must come from the Word of God and be in agreement with the Word of God. That is why this topic and the next topic are key topics on the subject of worship because we see that true worship will develop the ministry of each Christian.

1 Corinthians 14:23-25 we read, “Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in *those who are* uninformed or unbelievers, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 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.” The first thing that we notice is that Paul is talking about a meeting of the whole church when they all came together in one place. This describes a Sunday gathering when the whole church comes together to worship the Lord.

Paul goes on to describe the different effects that various gifts will have if a person comes into the service that is not yet a Christian. The word that is translated “uninformed” speaks of a person that is uneducated or illiterate. It is used in Acts 4:13 where we read, “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.” In comparison to the Jewish rulers, elders and scribes, Peter and John were considered uneducated and untrained men because they had only studied the Old Testament in the synagogue in Capernaum in Galilee and had not studied under a leading rabbi in the city of Jerusalem.

Paul was telling the Corinthian Christians that if someone came into a service of the whole church that had very limited knowledge of the Word of God or someone who was not even a believer that such a person would be greatly confused if everyone was speaking in other languages. In fact such a person would say that the Christians were out of their mind. The word that is translated “out of their mind” means to rave or speak like people who are not in their right mind. In contrast, Acts 2:3-11 concludes in verse 11, “Cretans and Arabs--we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God.” The tongues in Acts 2 were in the languages of the various groups of people that were gathered in Jerusalem and they all heard about the wonderful works of God in their own languages. This produced great interest instead

of great confusion. Paul was making it clear that other languages would only confuse an unbeliever.

In contrast, if people were prophesying by sharing the Word of God in the service, there would be a very different effect on a person that did not know the Scripture or an unbeliever. Paul said that such people would be convinced and convicted by all that they heard. The word that is translated “convinced” means to convict, refute or confute because the Word of God exposes sin. The word that is translated “convicted” means to examine or judge a person. Here we see that when we share the Word of God that the Word of God causes people to examine their own hearts.

In fact verse 25 says that the Word of God will reveal the secrets of the heart. In 1 Corinthians 4:5 Paul said that Christ will reveal the secrets of the heart. That verse says, “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God.” Then 2 Corinthians 4:2 says, “But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” In both verses we see that God is able to reveal the hidden things of the heart. Here we see that God reveals such secrets through His Word.

When an unbeliever has the secrets of his heart revealed through the Word of God, we see that the person will fall before the Lord in repentance that produces true worship. Such a person will also report that God is speaking through the Christians as they share the Word of God. This reminds us as 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.” God will work through His Word if Christians will share His Word.

Then 1 Corinthians 14:26 gives several ways to share the Word of God. That verse says, “How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.” Here we see that Paul goes on to give instructions about various ways to share the Word of God. In the Jewish synagogue services, seven to nine men would read various passages from the Old Testament. Here we see that Paul said someone can share in the worship service of the church and share the Word of God by reading a Psalm.

The word that is translated “teaching” speaks of the act of teaching or giving instruction. 2 Timothy 4:2 says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Here we see that we are to be ready at all times to share the Word of God to teach others. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Here we see that the Christians continued in the apostles' teaching. In fact that was one of the four basic things that they did to help new Christians grow.

The way that we can share the Word with a tongue is explained more fully in 1 Corinthians 14:27-28 where we read, “If anyone speaks in a tongue, *let there be* two or at the most three, *each* in turn, and let one interpret. But if there is no interpreter, let him keep silent in church, and let him speak to himself and to God.” Here we see that teaching in another language should be allowed only when there is someone present who can interpret that language. It is to be limited to two or at the most three people. They are to speak one at a time. It must be interpreted into the language of the people present. If there is no one to interpret the language, the person is to keep silent.

The word that is translated “revelation” means to reveal or make something known that was unknown. After Simeon saw Christ when Mary and Joseph brought Christ to the temple to dedicate him, Simeon said in Luke 2:30-32, “For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to *bring* revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.” Here we see that Christ came to reveal God to the Gentiles. As a part of his prayer for the Ephesians, Paul said in Ephesians 1:17-18, “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.” Here we see that God will give Christians both wisdom and revelation so that they will come to a greater understanding of Christ. As we explain what the Word has taught us about Christ, we are passing on to others what has been revealed to us about Christ from the Word of God.

The word that is translated “interpretation” speaks of interpreting something that was spoken in another language. This is explained in the only other place where this word is used in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians 12:10 says, “To another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another *different* kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.” Here we see that the word is used to speak of interpreting something that had been spoken in another language.

However, regardless of how a person shares the Word of God in a worship service, there is one requirement that always applies. We see that all speaking is to be done for edification. In fact edification is to be a continuous process or something that we carry out continually as we share the Word of God. Here we see that the reason why several people can share the Word of God in various ways in the worship service is to continually build up the Christians that are gathered together to worship the Lord. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that the reason why several people should share the Word of God in a worship service is to build up all Christians. Each one sharing the Word of God is also being built up in the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn how to develop the ministry of others.

Learning Why We Both Learn and Encourage

In our last topic, we saw the first part of the way that God wants to use a worship service of the whole church to develop and equip Christians to share the Word of God. We saw that when we gather in a worship service that God is the audience and we are the participants. Since we are the participants, we saw that we are given several ways to share the Word of God as we participate and that as we share the Word of God our goal is always to build up every Christian. Today, we are going to see that the Lord gives us several other instructions about the way that the Lord uses the worship service to build up and equip Christians for ministry to others.

In the early church it was common for two or three to explain the Word of God in a worship service of the whole church. 1 Corinthians 14:29-31 says, “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged.” Peter explained the ministry of the prophets in 2 Peter. In 2 Peter 1:19-21 he said that they wrote the Old Testament as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Then in 2 Peter 3:1-2 we read, “Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in *both of* which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.” In these verses, we see Peter explained that the prophets gave the Old Testament and the apostles gave the commandments of Christ in the New Testament. That is why Paul said in Ephesians 2:20 that the apostles and prophets are the foundation of the church.

The book of Acts also speaks of a number of prophets. We will mention two places where men are called prophets. Acts 13:1 says, “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” Then Acts 15:32 says, “Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.” Here we see that various people who explained the Word of God are called prophets. In the same way, in 1 Corinthians 14:29 we see that prophets talk about people who explain the Word of God to other Christians.

Here we see that Paul told the Corinthians that two or three prophets could explain the Word of God in a service. Since the New Testament was not yet complete, the others were to judge (listen with careful discernment) and make certain that the things taught were in agreement with the teachings of the apostles and the Old Testament. The others were to listen with careful discernment to recognize if something did not agree with the teaching of the apostles or the Old Testament. If one recognized a teaching that did not agree with what the apostles or the Old Testament taught, that person was to explain what was taught. In this way the entire congregation would learn to evaluate all teaching to make sure it was in agreement with the Word of God. Since these were all fairly new Christians, this was the way to make certain that the teaching of the apostles and the quotes from the Old Testament were in agreement with what was being taught.

In verse 31 we also see that all were allowed to have opportunities to share the Word of God in the worship services. In this way each person was becoming equipped to teach and explain the Word of God wherever they went. We see the results of such development in Acts 8:4 where we read, “Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Today, many Christians do not get opportunities to share the Word of God publicly with other Christians listening so they never learn to explain the Word of God wherever they go. We also

see that when all share the Word of God that all learn and all are encouraged. The one who is sharing the Word of God usually learns the most but all can learn from what the person shares. The Word God will also provide encouragement to all the Christians.

1 Corinthians 14:32-33 explains why the ones who speak will learn the most. Those verses say, “And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” Here we see that the spirits of those who share the Word of God are to be subject to the prophets. In John 14:26 Christ told the disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” As those who are preparing to speak the Word of God yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help them learn and grow in their own understanding.

We also see that the Holy Spirit does not produce confusion. 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.” As they yield their human spirit to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help those who are preparing to speak to compare other passages from the Word of God. In this way the Holy Spirit guides the human spirit so that the spirits of those who speak are subject to the speakers. As we yield our human spirits to the Holy Spirit, Philippians 4:7 promises, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” We can trust the Lord to guard our hearts and minds as we yield to Him while preparing.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 goes on to say, “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but *they are* to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.” Here we see that in the worship services of the whole church that God says that the men are to both teach others and also protect their wives. In Genesis 3:6 we read, “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 was with Eve and he failed to protect his wife from deception. In worship services the women are to be submissive and place their full potential at the disposal of their husbands by asking their husbands questions at home. Men will have to learn and remember if their wives are going to ask them to explain more at home.

However, women are also given a great teaching ministry as a part of the church. Titus 2:3-5 says, “The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.” Here we see that the older women are to learn how to teach the younger women at a separate time and not in a worship service that involves the whole church.

Paul concludes his discussion of a worship service of the whole church by giving a couple of key instructions. 1 Corinthians 14:36-38 says, “Or did the word of God come *originally* from you? Or *was it* you only that it reached? If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord. But if anyone is ignorant, let him be ignorant.” Since there were serious problems in the church at Corinth, Paul asked them if they were the ones that were originally given the Word of God. He asked if their church had received special instructions that had not been given to any other church.

Paul said that those who spoke the Word of God and those who were spiritual would recognize that the things that Paul was writing to the church at Corinth were the commandments of the Lord. Those who were spiritual would also choose to be obedient to the commandments of the Lord. In contrast, those who were ignorant would continue to be ignorant. 1 Corinthians 3:3 says, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men?” In this verse Paul had said that many of the Christians in Corinth were walking like those who were not even Christians. This had produced envy, strife and divisions. Paul said that such Christians might choose to hold on to their own opinions and not recognize that the things Paul wrote were the commandments of the Lord. Paul said that if such individuals chose to be ignorant to let them continue to be ignorant.

Then Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:39-40, “Therefore, brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and do not forbid to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.” The two things that could be most easily misused in a worship service were speaking the Word of God with a wrong attitude or speaking the Word of God in another language. That is why he gave special instructions about these two things. Paul said that they were not to forbid someone from speaking in another language as long as there was an interpreter. He told them to desire earnestly to prophesy. This meant that they were to eager to speak and explain the Word of God as long as their human spirit was under the control of the Holy Spirit both in their preparation and also as they spoke. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the importance of these commands.

We are to help our children learn to do all things in a decent and orderly manner so that other Christians are helped in their spiritual growth. As Paul says in Colossians 2:5, “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.” May the Lord richly bless you and fill you with joy as you help your children do things in a good order so that they continue to learn themselves and also help others learn and be encouraged.

Learning How to Explain the Gospel Clearly

In our last two topics we talked about the instructions that Paul gave to help the Corinthian church learn to use the worship service of the whole church both to equip believers to share the Word of God and to build up the entire church. As we equip our physical and spiritual children to serve the Lord, we want to help each one learn to explain the Gospel clearly so that they are equipped to share the Gospel with relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances that have never repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ and His death and resurrection.

Paul explained the Gospel clearly so that every Christian in Corinth would know how to explain the Gospel to others and answer the questions that others might have. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.” As Paul began these verses he said that he was going to explain the Gospel. First, Paul said that this was the Gospel that he had preached to the Corinthians when he had been at Corinth. Although many things change in this world, we see that the Gospel is one thing that does not change.

Second Paul said that this was the Gospel that the Corinthians had received when they placed their faith in Christ. Third, Paul said that this was the Gospel in which they now stood. Fourth, Paul said that this message of the Gospel is the message that saved them. Paul wanted to make it very clear to the Corinthian Christians that the Gospel is the only message that can provide salvation. It was the message to which they were to hold fast. The word that is translated “hold fast” means to keep, to get possession of, to take or to hold back. In I Thessalonians 5:17-21 we read, “Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.” Here we see that there are several things to keep doing once we place our faith in Christ. In the same way, we are to hold fast to the message of the Gospel so we can share it with others.

We see in the following verses that there are four things that the Corinthian Christians were to hold fast and share as they shared the Gospel with others. These include the following:

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
2. Christ was buried.
3. Christ rose again according to the Scriptures.
4. Christ was seen by many witnesses after His resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 says, “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Paul said that He had received this message that he was going to give them. Galatians 1:15-17 tells us that He received this message directly from the Lord, “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not consult any man, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus.” The Lord made sure that Paul could explain the message of the Gospel clearly as he took that message to the Gentiles.

We want to help our children clearly understand how to explain why it is important that Christ died for our sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, “And according to the law almost all things are purified

with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” We want to help our children learn to explain that if Christ had not shed His blood for our sins that it would be impossible for anyone to have their sins forgiven. Then one of the evidences of the fact that Christ died was the fact that He was buried. Another evidence of the fact that Christ died is recorded in John 19:34 where we read, “But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out.” The fact that the blood was already separating into blood and water was clear evidence of the fact that death had already occurred.

We also want to help our children clearly understand how to explain why it is absolutely essential that Christ rose again from the dead. 1 Corinthians 15:16-17 says, “For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” Here we see that the resurrection is absolutely necessary or we would still have our sins. If Christ would not have risen from the dead, it would be impossible for Him to raise us from the dead. In Matthew 28:5-7 we see that the angel was the first to announce the resurrection of Christ. Those verses say, “But the angel answered and said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” Here we see that the angel was the first to give the news of the resurrection.

The soldiers and the enemies of Christ were the next to verify the resurrection. Matthew 28:11-15 says, “Now while they were going, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.” The soldiers told the chief priests all of the details that they knew about the resurrection. The chief priests and elders paid them a large amount of money and promised to protect the soldiers from death because the chief priests and elders recognized that their story was true.

However, Christ also had many other witnesses of His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:5-8 says, “And that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.” There are a total of ten appearances of Christ after His resurrection that are recorded in the New Testament. More than 500 people saw Christ in the various times that He appeared. Most of those people were still living at the time that Paul wrote the book of 1 Corinthians. Many of these witnesses were later put to death because they taught the resurrection of Christ.

In 1 John 1:1 John explained four ways that he and the other disciples knew that Christ is alive. That verse says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life.” Christ even invited Thomas to put his hand in the hole where the spear had gone into Christ. John 20:27-28 says, “Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!” Here Thomas was invited to check out the evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

Paul also shared his own evidence for the resurrection of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:8-11 says, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of

the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore, whether it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.” Paul had seen Christ. Acts 9:3-6 says, “As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.” Paul was changed from the persecutor of Christ to the apostle to the Gentiles because he saw Christ.

Paul explained another key thing about the resurrection of Christ. He explained that the resurrection showed the grace of God to him personally. Prior to the appearance of Christ to him on the road to Damascus Paul had held the coats of those who stoned Stephen. Then Acts 8:3 says, “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.” Acts 9:1-2 says, “Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.” Here we see that Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest additional Christians at the very time that Christ changed his life.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain the Gospel clearly, we also want to help them realize the power of the Gospel. In Romans 1:16 Paul wrote, “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.” We want to help our children develop the same attitude as Paul. That will only happen as they see that we are not ashamed of the Gospel. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to share the message of the Gospel that will transform the lives of others.

Learning the Importance of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw some things that we want to help our physical and spiritual children clearly understand so that they can explain the Gospel clearly to others. In our topic today, we will see how to help them learn to explain the importance of the resurrection to others. We will see that there were even people in the church at Corinth that were teaching that there is no resurrection of the dead. As a result, Paul wanted all of the Christians to know how to answer those who were teaching that there is no resurrection. The Christians all believed in the resurrection of Christ or they would not have been Christians. However, some did not believe in the resurrection of the Christians.

As we read 1 Corinthians 15:12 Paul wrote, “Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Paul and those with him had clearly taught about the resurrection of Christ when they were in Corinth. The Corinthian Christians had believed in the death and resurrection of Christ. However, their understanding was limited and some were now teaching that there would be no physical resurrection of those who placed their faith in Christ. It is possible that some of the Jewish Christians in Corinth had been influenced by the Sadducees who did not believe in the resurrection. The Gentile Christians had been taught by their Greek philosophies that anything material including the body was evil. As a result, the rest of the chapter is written to help the believers know that their physical bodies would one day be raised from the dead.

Paul sounds like a lawyer who is presenting his case as he carefully explains the evidence for that fact that Christians will rise from the dead. He begins by showing the fact that if a person believed that there is no resurrection that then the resurrection of Christ would not have happened. 1 Corinthians 15:13-14 says, “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty.” Paul begins by showing seven consequences if there is no resurrection. First, in 1 Corinthians 15:16 Paul said again, “For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either.” Paul wanted to make it clear that the first consequence if there is no resurrection would be that it would have to include Christ. If there is no resurrection, then Christ could not have been raised from the dead.

The second consequence, if there is no resurrection, is that the preaching of Paul and those with him would be empty words. The word that is translated “empty” means vain, devoid of truth or that our work for Christ would be of no purpose. Paul said of his own life in Philippians 2:12-16, “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; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Paul wanted the Philippians to enjoy transformed lives so that his preaching among them would not be in vain or of no purpose.

Paul also wanted the Corinthians to realize that it was the resurrection that gave their lives meaning and purpose. A third consequence if there is no resurrection would be the fact that the faith of the Christians in Corinth would be vain or of no purpose. That is why Paul concludes this chapter in 1 Corinthians 15:56-58, “The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law. But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord,

knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Paul said that the resurrection meant that their work for the Lord was not in vain either.

In 1 Corinthians 15:15-17 Paul wrote, “Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up--if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins!” Here we see some additional consequences if there is no resurrection of the dead. A fourth consequence if there is no resurrection would be that all of the witnesses and those who spoke of the resurrection would be liars. People will not die for something that they know is a lie. Peter and the rest of the twelve would not be willing to die to get people to believe a lie. Yet most of the twelve did die for their faith because they knew that they spoke the truth.

A fifth consequence if there is no resurrection is mentioned in verse 17 and would have directly affected the Corinthians that had believed in Christ because their faith would be futile and they would still be in their sins. The word that is translated “futile” means it has no purpose. 1 Peter 1:18 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers.” Here we see that Peter reminds us that Christ redeemed us from our aimless conduct. That is why if there was no resurrection that our lives would have no purpose because then Christ could not have redeemed us. Peter also reminds us of another key lesson here. This aimless conduct has been handed down for many generations. As a result, in addition to redeeming us from our empty way of life, the resurrection of Christ means that He has also set us free from our burdens from the past that were passed down to us by our forefathers.

A sixth consequence if there is no resurrection is found in 1 Corinthians 15:18 which says, “Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost.” Here we see that every Christian that had already died would have perished. However, John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” We want to help our children learn how to explain to new Christians that they will never perish. John 10:27-30 says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one.” Christ taught the disciples that those who are His sheep will never perish. In addition, no one is able to take a single Christian out of the hand of Christ. Today, many Christians are afraid that they can lose their salvation. They need to understand that no one can take them out of the hand of Christ.

A seventh consequence if there is no resurrection is found in 1 Corinthians 15:19 which says, “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” Here we see that Christians would have no hope and Christians would actually be the most pitied people on the earth because they would believe in a false hope. The word that is translated “hope” speaks of the confident expectation of our eternal salvation. The root word is used six times in Romans 8:24-25 where we read, “For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.” Here we see that as Christians we can wait with confidence for the return of Christ to take us to heaven with perseverance.

Because of that hope we can wait for the return of Christ with great joy and peace in our lives. Romans 15:13 says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Here we see also that the Holy Spirit is the One who gives us that hope by His power. As Christians, this hope also gives us strength to serve the Lord in the present as we look forward to the future. Titus 2:11-14 says,

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself *His* own special people, zealous for good works.” We are given the strength to carry out good works because of the fact that we have this confident hope that Christ is coming to take us to heaven.

However, we see that we do not need to deal with these seven consequences that would face us and our children if there was no resurrection. Instead 1 Corinthians 15:20 says, “But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Here we are reminded that Christ has certainly risen from the dead. As 1 Corinthians 15:6 says, “After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” More than five hundred people saw that Christ was alive after His resurrection and could give testimony of His resurrection.

We also see that Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. The word that is translated “firstfruits” means a person who is superior in excellence to others of the same class. Romans 11:16 says, “For if the firstfruit *is* holy, the lump *is* also *holy*; and if the root *is* holy, so *are* the branches.” Christ is the firstfruits of those who are fallen asleep. John 15:1 says He is also the vine and we are the branches. This verse says that because the root is holy that the branches are also holy. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain to new Christians the fact that because Christ is holy that also causes us to be holy because we are the branches. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand the importance of the resurrection.

Learning the Order of the Resurrections

We concluded our last topic by seeing that Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. We saw that “firstfruits” means a person who is superior in excellence to others of the same class. Because Christ is holy and without sin, that meant that at the moment we became a Christian that we became holy in the sight of the Father because the Father looks at us through the righteousness of Christ. In our topic today, we are also going to see the fact that Christ is the firstfruits means that we can understand the order of some key events in the future.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22 says, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” These verses remind us of the consequences of the choice of Adam. Romans 5:12 says, “Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” We see that we all people experience death because of the sin of Adam. This actually talks about two kinds of death. It is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand both kinds of death so that they are equipped to answer the questions of new Christians.

Genesis 2:15-17 says, “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it. 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 put Adam in a perfect environment. He was given the freedom to do anything that he chose except one thing. He was also told what the consequences would be if he did that one thing. God told Adam that the very day that he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that he would die. This is a key place to explain to our children the difference between spiritual death and physical death.

Spiritual death is the separation of man from God. Physical death is the separation of the body from the soul and the human spirit. Genesis 3:7-8 says, “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.” Adam and Eve knew that they had sinned. They immediately tried to hide their shame. When they could not hide their shame, they then chose to hide from God in the Garden. Here we see that they had already experienced spiritual death and were hiding from God. Genesis 5:5 says that Adam experienced physical death 930 years later. That verse says, “So all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died.” We need to help our children understand the difference between spiritual and physical death so that they are equipped to answer questions that new Christians might ask them.

Adam caused every person to experience spiritual death which is separation from God. In contrast, Christ came to give us spiritual life so that we can have a relationship with God and enjoy fellowship with Him. 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.” As Christians we now have a relationship with God because we have become His children by His will. Then 1 John 1:6-7 promises us, “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.”

Here we see that as we choose to walk in the light that we enjoy fellowship both with Christ and with one another.

The fact that in Adam all die and in Christ we have been made alive is important for us to understand and explain to our children because it also helps us to understand the order of the resurrections. 1 Corinthians 15:23 says, "But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming." Christ was the first to experience physical resurrection with a new body. Here we see that Christians will be the second to experience resurrection and receive a new body. This will happen for us at the moment that Christ comes to take the church to heaven. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53 says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality." Our physical bodies will be raised and changed into glorified bodies that have not experienced the effects of sin.

After the resurrection of the righteous 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 then says, "Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death." Christ will put an end to Satan's power. Revelation 20:10 says, "The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Here we see the final judgment of Satan. Hebrews 2:14 says, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Here we see that Satan will be eternally judged.

Then Christ will bring an end to all human rule, authority and power. This is described in Revelation 20:11-15 where we see the judgment of all unbelievers. Then Christ will reign because all of His enemies have been placed under His feet. Philippians 2:9-11 says, "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 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." As a part of their judgment all unbelievers will be forced to bow their knees before Christ and finally confess that Jesus is Lord. Then Revelation 20:15 says, "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Here we see that they will confess but it will be too late and they also will experience eternal judgment.

The time of the end is described in Revelation 21:1-3 where we read, "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God." After the final judgment at the end of Revelation 20, eternity will begin with the new heaven and the new earth. Here we see that things will be restored to the perfection that existed before Adam and Eve sinned.

In 1 Corinthians 15:27-28 we read, "For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under *Him*," *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all." The first part of verse 27 is a quotation from Psalm 8:6. In that Psalm we see that the Father placed all things under

Christ. In Matthew 28:18 we read, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Christ is the One who have been given all authority by the Father.

We see that Psalm 8 will be fully fulfilled at that time when all judgment is complete and Christ will rule for eternity. Revelation 11:15 says, “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become *the kingdoms* of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” Here we see that as the seventh angel sounded that He looked forward to the time when the Father and Christ would begin their eternal rule.

We also see that these verses explain the eternal relationship between the Father and Christ. We see that Christ will choose to be subject to the Father. Christ explained this relationship in John 5:26-27 where we read, “For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.” Here we are reminded again that although the Father and Son are equal that the Son has chosen to be submissive to the Father. True submission means that a person places their full potential at the disposal of another. Christ will rule throughout eternity. At the same time He will subject Himself to the Father. This is also what Christ did when He came to this earth. John 6:38 says, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” Here we see that the desire of Christ is that God may be all in all.

In these verses, we see that the fact that Christ is the “firstfruits” means far more than just the fact that He was the first to rise with a glorified body. Here we see that the result of the fact that Christ is the “firstfruits” means that He will rule for all eternity in the restored creation because sin and death have been defeated. At the same time Christ will continue to bring glory to the Father throughout eternity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to answer questions that new Christians may ask about our eternal state.

Learning the Value of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw the order of the resurrections. We also saw that the Father and Christ will rule throughout all eternity. Today, we are going to focus on the topic of how to help our physical and spiritual children explain the value of the resurrection. As we mentioned a couple of topics earlier there were people in Corinth that said that there was no resurrection. As a result, we saw how Paul gave the evidence for the resurrection. In this topic we will see that he now shows the value of the resurrection.

Paul explains the value of the resurrection for others and then goes on to explain the value of the resurrection to him in his own life. 1 Corinthians 15:29-30 says, "Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead? And why do we stand in jeopardy every hour?" In verses 12 through 19 of this chapter we saw in an earlier topic that there were some who were teaching that there is no resurrection. Then we saw seven consequences if there is no resurrection. Then we saw that Christ because the first to be raised with a new body. In our last topic, we saw the order of the resurrections. That is the background for our questions in these verses.

The first question is a response to those who were saying that there is no resurrection. Paul asked why people who saw the life and death of the Christians who had died would choose to place their faith in Christ and be baptized if those who had already died were not going to experience resurrection. He then asked why anyone would want to be baptized to take the place of those who had died. Paul went on to ask why he and the others who taught about Christ would be willing to place themselves in danger if there is no resurrection. Paul could clearly answer that question because of his own experience. Paul had watched and listened to what Stephen said as he died. Acts 7:60 says, "Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Paul had been the leader and held the coats of those who stoned Stephen to death. He could never forget the love shown by those final words of Stephen before he died. Paul saw the love that controlled the life of Stephen because of the hope that he had in Christ because of the resurrection.

Then Paul speaks of his own life in the next verses. 1 Corinthians 15:31-32 says, "I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily. If, in the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage *is it* to me? If *the* dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" Throughout his ministry, Paul had been beaten, thrown in prison, and had to leave town in the middle of the night to escape being killed. His life was in danger daily. Paul asked why he would be willing to risk his life every day if there was no resurrection. Then he mentioned how he had fought with beasts in the city of Ephesus. This may mean that he was forced to fight wild animals in the arena or it may mean the way his life was placed in danger by the mob that wanted to kill him as recorded in Acts 19:23-34. Either way his life was in great danger. Here Paul reminded the Corinthians that he was willing to die for his faith in Christ. That was due to the fact that he looked forward to the resurrection.

Then Paul reminded them of what earlier Jews had said that could not look forward to the resurrection. In his day Isaiah had called for the people of Judah to repent. Instead of listening to Isaiah, the people responded in Isaiah 22:13, "But instead, joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!" The people in the day of Isaiah did not repent. Instead they said that they would live to satisfy themselves with sin. Here we see that Paul said that if there is no resurrection that he might as

well choose the same response as the people had chosen in the time of Isaiah.

Paul gives his response to that attitude in the next two verses. 1 Corinthians 15:33-34 says, “Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your shame.” Paul warned the Corinthians not to be deceived by these false teachers and their teaching that there is no resurrection. He said that bad company destroyed good habits. He realized that false teachers try to get people to live for the moment and please themselves. The people in the time of Isaiah had chosen to live to please themselves because they had no hope of the resurrection. Paul was concerned that the same thing would happen to the Corinthians.

Paul told the Corinthian Christians to wake up. Paul wanted them to realize that there is a resurrection. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there are two different ways to live. Those who choose to live for today will corrupt and destroy themselves. In contrast, those who look to the future will have a purpose for life on this earth and hope for the future. That is why Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to practice righteousness. He reminded them that there were many people who had not yet learned about the death and resurrection of Christ. Here we see that the message of the resurrection will cause us to want others to hear that message also so that they can place their faith in Christ and have hope for the future. As we help our children to learn to focus on what is eternal instead of what is temporary, they will also find that God gives them a purpose for their lives and hope for the future.

We also need to help our children understand that most of the people of the world have no hope for the future because they have not yet heard the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. Such people are still controlled by the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Christ gave us the example to follow when He died to pay the penalty for sin and rose again to complete the judgment of Satan. As a result, Christ gave us a message to share with others that will release them from the fear of death which will hold them in bondage throughout their lives unless they learn about Christ.

Paul knew that the Corinthian Christians had other questions about the resurrection. As a result, Paul mentioned two other questions that someone might ask. Those questions are in 1 Corinthians 15:35 where we read, “But someone will say, “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” Since there were false teachers that were teaching that there is no resurrection, Paul knew that one question that the people would have was, “How are the dead raised up?” Paul probably faced this question many times in his life and ministry. We see in Acts 26:24 that Festus accused him of being insane because of his belief in the resurrection. That verse says, “Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, “Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” The statement of Festus was a result of the answer that Paul had given in answer to the question he asked in Acts 26:8, “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” Paul had again mentioned the resurrection in verse 23 and Festus did not even want to hear about the resurrection.

Paul also gave a second question that Paul had probably been asked many times. That question is, “And with what body do they come?” When people refuse to accept the resurrection they often try to raise questions that show that they do not believe in the resurrection. One illustration where this happened to Paul is given in Acts 17:32 where we read, “And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this *matter*.” Here we see that some people mocked when they heard of the resurrection.

The other apostles had also faced this same rejection of the message of the resurrection. Acts 4:2 says, "Being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." Here we see that the Sadducees were very upset that the apostles taught the people about the resurrection of Christ. Paul gives the answer to both of these questions in the remaining verses of 1 Corinthians 15.

Paul gives four illustrations to illustrate the fact of the resurrection. The first is given in 1 Corinthians 15:36-38 where we read, "Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain--perhaps wheat or some other *grain*. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body." Here we see that Paul uses the seed of a plant as his first illustration of the resurrection. When a seed of grain is planted, that seed actually dies and the plant that develops comes from the inner part of the seed. Christ said in John 12:24, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." Here we see that the seed or a grain of wheat has to die in order to produce the plant that produces much grain. That small kernel of grain is much different than the plant that is produced from it.

Paul said in his illustration that you do not plant the plant that will eventually develop. Instead you just plant a kernel of wheat or other grain. God is the One who gives that kernel that is planted a new body. The new body that God gives to that kernel of grain is given by God as He pleases. In this first illustration of the fact of resurrection Paul points out the fact that the new body of the grain is different than the grain that was planted. In the same way he goes on to show later in this chapter that as Christians we will be given a new body at our resurrection. This new body will not be like the body that we presently have. Instead this new body will be a body that can never be destroyed. It will be a body that will last for all eternity. This physical body must be replaced with that new body in order for it to be eternal. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to explain the value of the resurrection.

Learning to Reflect the Heavenly Image

In our last topic, we looked at the answer that Paul gave to the Corinthian Christians about the value of the resurrection. In order for our physical and spiritual children to be able to answer various questions that others will ask them about the resurrection, we need to help them understand the various questions that Paul answered about the resurrection. In 1 Corinthians 15:35 we saw that Paul asked two questions that people commonly ask about the resurrection. We also said that Paul gave four illustrations to answer these questions. We saw his first illustration in our last topic as Paul used a seed of grain to illustrate the resurrection. We will see the other three illustrations in our topic today.

In 1 Corinthians 15:39-42 we read, “All flesh *is* not the same flesh, but *there is* one *kind of* flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, *and* another of birds. *There are* also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory. So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.” In these verses, we see that Paul says that many things have different kinds of bodies. First he describes various living things. People have one kind of flesh. Animals have a different kind of flesh. Fish have still another kind of flesh and birds have a fourth kind of flesh.

There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. Those bodies that are in the heavens have a different kind of glory than the bodies that are on the earth. The sun reveals one kind of glory while the moon reflects the glory of the sun. The stars are also different than the sun or the moon. Paul points out the fact that no two stars are the same. God has made every star different from any other star. In fact they are so different that God has given each star a different name. Psalm 147:4 says, “He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.” Here we are reminded that God chose to make each star different because He is very creative in all that He does.

Paul goes on to tell why God makes bodies on earth different from bodies in the heavens. He tells why each star is different from any other star. Paul said that God did this to illustrate what we will be like in the resurrection. We will have a different body in the resurrection than we have right now. In Psalm 90:10 we read, “The days of our lives *are* seventy years; and if by reason of strength *they are* eighty years, yet their boast *is* only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.” Here we are reminded that our physical bodies are very temporary. That is why we will certainly need a different body in the resurrection because this body grows old. Even the years that we live are filled with labor and sorrow as a result of sin. The time quickly comes that our life is over. That is why we need a body that is very different from the body that we presently have.

For that reason Paul goes on to answer the question of what our new bodies will be like. As our children learn to understand these verses, they will also learn how to answer some of the questions that they will be asked by new Christians. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44 says, “So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” In these verses, we see that our resurrection bodies will be different in four ways from our present bodies.

First, our present body is a body that corrupts when it is buried. This means that it will rot and decay. In contrast, our new body will be raised in incorruption. 1 Corinthians 15:54 says, "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." The word that is translated "incorruption" means a body that is pure and cannot rot and decay. That is due to the fact that our new body is an eternal body and it will last forever.

Second, our present body is a body that is sown in dishonor. This means that it is a body that is buried because if it is not buried it will rot away in disgrace because it will rot and decay. In contrast, our new body will be raised in glory. Here we see that our new body will be a body that is raised in glory. In 1 Peter 1:6-7 we read, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, *being* much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Our faith will be found a faith that has been tested by fire and has stood the test. God says that faith is more precious than gold. As a result, God will give us a new body that reflects this glory.

Third, our present body is sown in weakness. The word that is translated weakness is used in Romans 6:19 where we read, "I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, so now present your members *as* slaves of righteousness for holiness." The weakness of our flesh only leads to sin when we try to do things in our own strength. In contrast, our new body will be raised in power. We have this power now at those times that we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. Here we see that we will have a new body that demonstrates this power throughout eternity.

Fourth, our present body is sown a natural body. The word that is translated "natural" means belonging to breath. It speaks of the human body that has the limitations of time and space. In contrast, our new body will be raised a spiritual body. It will not have the limitations of time and space. In Acts 1:9 we read, "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Here we see that Christ was not limited by the law of gravity. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." Here we see that our bodies will also be changed when Christ takes us to heaven.

In verse 35 Paul asked the question, "And with what body do they come?" That question is now answered in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 where we read, "And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man*." Adam is given as our example of all human life. The first man Adam was made from the dust. He had a natural body. As a result, every person since Adam has had a natural, earthly body.

In contrast, we see that the last Adam (Christ) became a life-giving spirit. In John 10:10 Christ said, "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." Adam was given human life while Christ came to give spiritual life. As a result, Christ came from heaven to this earth. 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." Here we see that the coming of

Christ is what made it possible for us to have a spiritual body.

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.” Here we see that we were made a new creation. This happened because we received spiritual life. However, we did not receive a spiritual body at that time. Before His death, Christ had a fleshly human body. At His resurrection Christ had a new body without the limitations of time and space. In the same way the body that we now have is made in the image of the body of Adam. At the moment that we are raised from the dead, we will be given a new body that is in the image that Christ had after His resurrection. That is why we will have a body like Christ throughout eternity.

That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15:50, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.” The natural body that we now have has flesh and blood. This body cannot inherit the kingdom of God because it bears the effects of sin. It is a body that will experience corruption because it will rot and decay. As a result, that is why we must have a new body (a spiritual body) because our present body could never last through eternity.

As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to answer the questions that new Christians may ask about what our bodies will be like in heaven, we also help them to gain a greater understanding and purpose for their own lives. That is why 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Here we see that the resurrection gives them a reason to serve the Lord because they will know that their labor is not wasted as they serve the Lord on this earth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to reflect the glory of Christ in their lives today.

Learning How We Should Live in View of the Resurrection

In our last topic, we saw that Paul answered some of the questions that new Christians ask about the resurrection. We saw that Paul gave us examples that will help us to explain to our physical and spiritual children the difference between the physical body that they now have and the spiritual body that they will have when Christ takes them to heaven. However, the resurrection does more than just prepare us for the future. The resurrection also gives meaning to our lives today and we see that as we grow in our understanding of the resurrection that it will help us to understand how to live our lives with purpose as we wait for the coming of the Lord to give us resurrection bodies.

In the New Testament the word “mystery” is used to explain something that was not previously revealed in the Old Testament. In Ephesians 3:4-6 Paul wrote, “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: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel.” In the Old Testament it was not revealed that the Gentiles would become fellow heirs with the Jews of the promises of Christ through the Gospel.

We see that Paul also writes about another mystery that was not revealed in the Old Testament. In 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 we read, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” Here we see that Paul explains what will happen to all Christians when Christ comes for the church to take us to heaven at the rapture.

When Christ comes to take us to heaven at the rapture, some Christians will be alive on the earth. If we are among those Christians, we will not experience physical death (sleep). Instead we will be changed. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 says, “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Here we see that Christ is going to come at the rapture and take all Christians to heaven. Those Christians who have died will return with Christ with their souls and spirits. Then their bodies will be raised as new bodies (spiritual bodies) and rejoined with their souls and spirits.

We also see that if we are still alive and remain that we will also be caught up together with them to meet the Lord in the air. However, 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 says that at that very moment that our bodies will be changed. This change will happen very suddenly. In fact it says it will happen in the twinkling of an eye. Since our eyes move faster than any other part of the body it will happen in a fraction of a second. This will happen at the time that the trumpet sounds to call the church to heaven at the rapture. At the moment that the trumpet sounds, the dead will have their bodies raised back to life. These new spiritual bodies will be like the body of Christ because they will be bodies that are incorruptible. This means that they can never rot or decay but will be perfect bodies for all eternity. At the same time that the bodies of the dead

in Christ are being raised the bodies of all Christians that are still alive will also be changed. As a result, when we meet the Lord in the clouds we will all have incorruptible bodies.

In fact we see that there will be two changes to our old natural body. 1 Corinthians 15:53-54 says, "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." This human body that now rots and decays will put on incorruption so that it will no longer rot or decay. This mortal body or body that dies must put on immortality. Immortality means that our new body will never die but will last forever because it is an everlasting body. The word that is translated "victory" means to have complete victory.

In Isaiah 25:8 we read, "He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the LORD has spoken." Here we see that the words written by Isaiah will be carried out in the lives of the Christians at the moment of the rapture. The word translated "victory" is only used four times in the New Testament and three are here in verses 54-57. The other time is in Matthew 12:20 where we read, "A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench, till He sends forth justice to victory." A reed was used as a small musical instrument. Once it was cracked it was useless. However, Christ came to restore those whose lives had been useless into lives that became useful. He came to give the humble complete victory.

In 1 Corinthians 15:55-56 we read, "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death *is* sin, and the strength of sin *is* the law." Verse 55 is based on Hosea 13:14 where we read, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O Death, I will be your plagues! O Grave, I will be your destruction! Pity is hidden from My eyes." The statement from Hosea compared death to the sting of a bee. Here we see that the sting of death is removed. We see that the grave has lost its power.

Then verse 56 explains why the sting of death and the power of the grave have both been removed. Death is the result of sin. Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Here we see that the resurrection defeats the sting of death. Since the strength of sin is the law, we see that the law no longer has an effect over us once we place our trust in Christ. Galatians 3:24-25 says, "Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." The law completed its purpose when it brought us to Christ and so we are no longer under the law.

As a result, as Christians 1 Corinthians 15:57 now tells us, "But thanks *be* to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we see that we can now give thanks to God because Christ has given us total victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This victory is not just a future victory. Since this victory is given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ, it means that as Christians we are able to enjoy the practical benefits of that victory right now. This verse shows us that one of the things that this victory means is that we are now able to give thanks instead of complaining. Ephesians 5:20 says, "Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we are reminded of one of the present benefits of the resurrection. We see that instead of being controlled by fear, we can be filled with an attitude of thankfulness.

We also go on to see that the resurrection gives us the power to make an impact for the Lord while we remain on this earth. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." This verse points out several reasons why our lives are able to have an

impact for the Lord.

First, we have become beloved brethren. 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." As beloved brethren, we have direct access to the Father through Christ and we have become joint heirs with Christ.

Second, the word that is translated "steadfast" means that we are able to stand firm in the strength that Christ gives us as we yield to the Holy Spirit. Third, the word that is translated "unmovable" means what cannot be moved from its place or firmly persistent. This means that we can be persistent as we stand firm in Christ. Fourth, we see that we can always be abounding in the work of the Lord. The word that is translated "abounding" means to exceed or overflow. The resurrection means that Christ is able to give us His strength so that we can overflow in our work for the Lord. 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." We can know ourselves and assure our children that Christ is able to do through our lives more than we could ever imagine. For that reason we can know that our service for the Lord is not in vain. As we help our children to realize that the resurrection means that Christ is able to do more through their lives than they can ever imagine, they will realize why service for the Lord has such great value on this earth. They will see that service for the Lord gives them a purpose for life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children understand the value of the resurrection for today.

Learning the Importance of Open Doors

In our last topic, we saw that the resurrection gives our lives as Christians meaning and purpose for the present as well as eternal life for the future. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that the resurrection gives them a reason to be thankful for all things. We also saw that the resurrection gives them a great purpose for their lives as they abound in the work of the Lord. In our topic today, we are going to see that one of the things that we want to help our children recognize the open doors when the Lord has given them open doors to serve the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 we see that Paul first answers the questions of the Corinthian Christians that they had about the offering that they were preparing to send to help the Christians in Jerusalem. Those verses say, “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. And when I come, whomever you approve by *your* letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.” The Christians in many different areas were collecting money to help the needy Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were experiencing much persecution and suffering from the Jews who had rejected the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We actually learn several principles that we want to model for our physical and spiritual children about giving to the Lord from the instructions in these verse verses. First, Paul encouraged them to give on the first day of the week. In the Old Testament the Jews had worshiped on the Sabbath or Saturday. However, here we see that as Christians we gather on the first day of the week to worship because we are remembering the day of the week that Christ rose from the dead. Acts 20:7 says, “Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” Here we see that it was a common practice for the Christians to get together to break bread on the first day of the week. Paul told the Corinthian Christians to use this gathering as the time to give their offerings.

Second, we see that Paul instructed the Christians to lay aside their offering during the week so that they would be prepared to bring their offering on the first day of the week. At that time it was common for the workers to be paid each day at the end of the day. As a result, they were encouraged to lay aside their money each day during the week so that they would be prepared to bring their offering when they gathered together on the first day of the week.

Third, their offering was to be based on the way that the Lord had prospered them. The word that is translated “prospered” means the way that the Lord has blessed us in many different ways. In 3 John 2 we read, “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.” Here we see that prospering can related to prospering in health, in our spiritual life or in all areas of our lives. For the Corinthians, Paul was talking in this verse about the way that the Lord had prospered the Corinthian Christians financially. Paul said that they should bring their offerings each week so that they would be no need to try and gather the money together when he came.

Fourth, said that they were to choose the people who would handle their gifts. The word that is translated “approve” in this verse means to recognize a person as worthy after examination or to approve a person. Those who are responsible to care for the money of the church are often

called stewards. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Paul wrote, “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” As a result, Paul told them to choose faithful people to handle the money of the church. Paul said that the ones they chose could handle and even take their gifts to the needy saints in Jerusalem. This is a principle that we also want to explain to our children. It is important to choose people to handle the money of any church that are recognized as worthy or qualified to handle the money so that there will be no questions about the way that the money is handled.

Fifth, Paul said that if others thought it would be fitting for him to go with those who would take the money to Jerusalem that he would also go with them. Here we see that Paul was willing to do whatever was necessary to help the churches get their gifts to the suffering Christians in Jerusalem. We want to provide an example to our children by our own lives of being available to help the churches carry out their ministry for the Lord.

Paul went on in 1 Corinthians 16:5-7 to say, “Now I will come to you when I pass through Macedonia (for I am passing through Macedonia). And it may be that I will remain, or even spend the winter with you, that you may send me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not wish to see you now on the way; but I hope to stay a while with you, if the Lord permits.” In these verses, we see that Paul had a desire to visit the church in Corinth. He was already planning to take a trip to Macedonia, the Lord willing.

In fact Paul even said that it might be possible for him to spend the winter with the Christians in the city of Corinth. Here we see that Paul had a real desire to help the Christians in Corinth in their spiritual growth. In fact Paul had written in 1 Corinthians 4:14-16, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Here we see that Paul had the concern of a spiritual parent and wanted to help these Christians in their spiritual growth and development. We also want to help our children learn how to become spiritual parents to others do that they can help others in their spiritual growth.

Paul said that he wanted to spend time with the Christians in Corinth. As a result, he did not just want to come and then leave immediately. He had a desire to spend the entire winter with them in order to help them in their spiritual growth. Then he said that they could send him on his way. As a result, He said that he would also come to Corinth if the Lord allowed him. Here we see that the attitude of Paul was to make certain that whatever he did he was doing the will of the Lord. This is also an attitude that we want to show our children by our own example.

However, Paul explained why he needed to stay in Ephesus for a period of time before he came to the city of Corinth. 1 Corinthians 16:8-9 says, “But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and *there are* many adversaries.” Paul realized the need to continue his teaching in the city of Ephesus to prepare the Christians there for the opposition that they were facing.

The Lord had opened a great and effective door in the city of Ephesus. Acts 19:8-10 tells what happened when Paul came to the city of Ephesus. Those verses say, “And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.” Here we see that even though there

was great opposition from the Jews in Ephesus, the Lord had opened a great and effective door for ministry for Paul. Many times the places where we face the most opposition are also the places where the Lord wants to do His greatest work through us.

Here we see that Paul had the opportunity to give daily instruction to the people who followed the Lord and were becoming disciples. Then these people were taking the Word of God throughout the entire Roman province of Asia. As a result, the Gospel was spreading to many places that Paul had not even had the opportunity to visit personally. Two such cities were the cities of Colosse and Laodicea. Colossians 2:1 says, "For I want you to know what a great conflict I have for you and those in Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." Colossians 4:12-13 tells us that Epaphras was the one that brought the Gospel to these cities as well as to the city of Hierapolis.

However, Paul also had many adversaries. 2 Corinthians 1:8-10 says, "For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*." In addition to many Jews turning against Paul, the silversmiths of Ephesus also fought against Paul. In Acts 19:23-34 we see that this opposition was led by a man named Demetrius. He said in Acts 19:27-28, "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship." Now when they heard *this*, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great *is* Diana of the Ephesians!" Here we see that Christianity was hurting the business of making idols and the silversmiths were filled with wrath. As a result, Paul had opposition from both the Jews and also many of the businessmen in the city of Ephesus. We need to prepare for our children for the fact that open doors to share the Gospel will often include opposition from those who reject Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand how God opens doors for ministry.

Learning to Build Relationships Between Others

In our last topic, we saw that Paul spoke of the fact that God opens doors of ministry for us. He also reminded us of the fact that when there are open doors that there will also be opposition from Satan. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the doors that the Lord opens for them to share the Gospel. At the same time we also want to prepare them for the opposition that will accompany those open doors. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul gives us some key examples about the way to build relationships with other Christians and between other Christians.

In 1 Corinthians 16:10-12 we read, "Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also *do*. Therefore let no one despise him. But send him on his journey in peace, that he may come to me; for I am waiting for him with the brethren. Now concerning *our* brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brethren, but he was quite unwilling to come at this time; however, he will come when he has a convenient time." Here we see that Paul wanted to build the relationship between the Christians in Corinth and Timothy. Paul encouraged them to treat Timothy in such a way that he would not experience fear. This reminds us that when Christians have conflicts such as the Corinthian Christians had that their conflicts can produce fear in others.

Paul also wanted to help the Corinthian Christians realize that Timothy was doing the same work that he was doing. In the same way we need to help our children realize that other godly Christians are partners in ministry and not competition. All true ministry is the Lord's ministry and not ours. Paul also encouraged the Christians to share with Timothy financially to help him in his travels.

In addition, Paul also reminded the Corinthians that Apollos was a partner in ministry. In 1 Corinthians 1:12-13 Paul had said, "Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Then Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase." Paul wanted to make it clear to the Christians that we are not to follow individual leaders. Instead we are to recognize that as Christians we are partners in ministry and it is God who gives the increase because He is the One that we serve.

Here we see an important lesson that we want to teach by our example and help our children to understand. We are not to spend our time fighting other Christians. Instead we are to fight sin and the devil. Even though other Christians may even teach some nonessential doctrines a little differently than the way we teach them, they are Christians that are working under the head who is Christ. Christ told the disciples in Mark 9:38-40, "Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side." Instead of spending our time fighting other Christians, we need to pray for them because we will spend eternity with them when we meet the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 16:13-18 we read, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all *that* you *do* be done with love. I urge you, brethren--you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and *that* they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the

saints--that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with *us*. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men.” Here we see that Paul gave us a second example of the way to build relationships between other Christians.

Paul wanted the Christians to stand fast in the faith, to be strong and to do all that they did in love. Stephanas and his family were among the first to become Christians when Paul originally brought the Gospel to Corinth. 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 says, “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.” Here we see that Paul only baptized the first few believers and then those men or others baptized the rest of the Corinthians that became Christians. We also see that Stephanas and his family had devoted themselves to serving the other Christians in Corinth. Here we see that Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to submit themselves to Stephanas as well as to the others who had worked with Paul in the development of the church at Corinth.

Stephanas and the others who had worked to help develop the church at Corinth were the leadership that Paul had left to lead the church when he left Corinth. The writer of Hebrews said in Hebrews 13:17, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” To submit means to place your full potential at the disposal of another. We have seen that the church at Corinth had many problems because many of the Christians were carnal. Paul encouraged the Christian in Corinth to place their full potential at the disposal of these godly leaders and help them in the work of serving the Lord. Here we see that Paul was working to build the relationships between the leaders and the rest of the Christians in Corinth.

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come from Corinth to share what they had with Paul to help them in his ministry in the city of Ephesus. Paul said that the three had refreshed his spirit just as they had refreshed the spirits of the Christians in Corinth. As a result, Paul encouraged the Christians at Corinth to acknowledge these men. The word that is translated “acknowledge them” means to recognize them and become thoroughly acquainted with them. Many times those who have devoted their lives to serving other Christians are often unnoticed by the rest of the Christians. Here we see that Paul encouraged the other Christians to spend time with these men so that they could really observe them and get to know them. Paul had seen that Stephanas and probably the other two had a real servant’s heart. That was exactly the kind of example that the rest of the Christians in Corinth needed to follow in order to become spiritual instead of remaining carnal. In the same way, Christians today need to recognize and spend time with those Christians that have a servant’s heart so that they can learn from their example. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to build such a relationship with these men.

In 1 Corinthians 16:19-24 we read, “The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The salutation with my own hand--Paul's. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. My love *be* with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.” Here we see that Paul also wanted to build relationships between the churches in different areas. As a result, he said that the churches in Asia also sent their greetings to the church that was in Corinth.

In addition, Paul also sent hearty greetings to the church at Corinth from Aquila and Priscilla and the church that was in their house. In Acts 18:1-3 we read, “After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in

Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Here we see that Aquila and Priscilla had lived in Corinth for a period of time. In fact Paul had stayed with them and worked with them when he first came to Corinth. As a result, many of the Christians in Corinth knew Aquila and Priscilla. Then they had traveled to Ephesus with Paul and there was now a church in their house in that city.

Paul wanted to continue to build the relationship between the church in Corinth and Aquila and Priscilla. In this way that Christians in Corinth were also reminded to pray for Aquila and Priscilla as they served the Lord in Ephesus. We also see that everywhere Aquila and Priscilla went that they used their home as a place of ministry. As a result, their home was used as the meeting place for one of the congregations that had developed in the city of Ephesus. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to use their homes as places to minister to others.

Paul also said that all of the brethren in Ephesus and the surrounding area wanted to send their greetings to the church in Corinth. Paul also told the Christians in Corinth to greet one another with a holy kiss when they met each other. Although Paul had dictated the letter and had someone else write it, he wrote this last paragraph and signed the letter to show his love for the Corinthians. Paul also warned that any who did not love the Lord were actually still accursed which meant that they still faced eternal judgment and needed to prepare because the Lord is coming soon. Paul wanted every person to experience the grace of God by placing their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. This should also be our own prayer. As we have this concern in our own lives, our children will develop the same concern for others because they see our example. Paul concluded this letter by reminding the Corinthian Christians of his love for them. We also want to regularly remind our physical and spiritual children of our love for them. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to build healthy relationships with others.