

Helping Our Children Develop Others Part I

**Growing Godly Family Series
Manual 7**

By

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Last Updated: January 2013

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Growing Godly Families Series

This series of manuals is the result of a series of weekly e-mail topics that have been prepared and e-mailed over a period of years. They originally started out as a one page topic that gradually grew to the point where most topics are about three pages in length.

This series is especially designed for those who are already Christian leaders to give them Biblical principles for the development of godly physical and spiritual families. Because they give Biblical principles for developing godly families, they are also helpful for new Christians that want to grow and become godly families.

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. The purpose of this series is to help every family develop their full potential as godly families.

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 in this world 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." I 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 help your family life count for eternity by bringing glory to God.

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1.

Understanding a Common Cause of Division Among Christians

Today we are beginning a new series of topics of the book of I Corinthians. The church in Corinth had many problems as the result of immaturity. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help Christians who are struggling because of spiritual immaturity. Sometimes our children may be struggling in their own lives as they go through the process of growing to spiritual maturity. Either way this book gives us many practical lessons about how to help our children grow to spiritual maturity or to equip them to help others grow to spiritual maturity.

In I Corinthians 1:1-3 we read, “Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In this introduction Paul reminds us that all Christians are called to be saints. This is true in whatever part of the world we live. At the moment of salvation we were changed from sinners to saints. However, it is only as we grow to spiritual maturity that we learn to act like saints in all areas of our lives.

Paul began by explaining to the Corinthians what God has done to help each person grow to maturity so that they could become mature even though they lived in a city that was filled with idol worship and all of the sin that went along with that idol worship. In I Corinthians 1:4-9 we read, “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, *that you may be* blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God *is* faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” In these verses we see several things that the Lord has done to help every Christian grow to spiritual maturity. These include:

1. God gave us His grace by Christ Jesus in the past.
2. God enriched us in everything by giving us all that we need in the present.
3. God made it possible for us to speak the Word of God.
4. God made it possible for us to understand the Word of God.
5. God established the testimony of Christ in us at the moment of salvation.
6. God gave us one or more gifts to serve His body, the church.
7. God gave us a hope for the future – the coming of Christ to take us to heaven.
8. God will cause us to be blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
9. God is faithful and has called us into the fellowship of His Son.

The Lord has done all of these things for each of us and for each of our children that have placed their faith in Christ. However, that does not mean that Christians will not experience problems in their lives especially if they do not grow to spiritual maturity. We see in I Corinthians 1:11 one of the things that hinders and prevents growth to spiritual maturity. That

verse says, “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.” The word that is translated “perfectly joined together” means to mend or put back together something that is broken. We see that Paul pleaded with the Corinthians as a father would with his beloved children that they would resolve the divisions that were in the church.

Paul focused on a key thing that is important to restore unity in any church. He pleaded with them that they would all learn to speak the same thing. Here we see that they were to be in agreement about what they taught and how they taught it. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” First, unity will only develop in a local church as the people learn to base their beliefs on the Word of God and not their own opinions. This requires systematic teaching of the Word of God. Second, unity will only be developed or restored as people learn to speak the truth to one another in love. People learn to speak in love as they learn to be led by the love of Christ instead of driven by the fear of people.

Paul told how he had learned about the divisions that were in the church at Corinth. Some of the members of the family of Chloe had met Paul and told him what was happening in the church. They reported to Paul that there were contentions in the church. The word that is translated “contentions” is most commonly translated by the word strife. That is the way it is translated in I Corinthians 3:3 where we read, “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 we see that Paul said that the kind of conflict that was happening in the church at Corinth was like the conflict that went on between people that were not even Christians. This often happens when many of the people in a local church are not growing to spiritual maturity.

Paul went on to write and explain what kind of divisions were developing because of this lack of spiritual maturity. I Corinthians 1:12-13 says, “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?” The people were choosing various Christian leaders and claiming to be followers of those particular leaders. Some claimed to be followers of Paul. Others claimed to be followers of Apollos. Another group claimed to follow Peter. Then there was still another group that probably said they were more spiritual than the rest because they didn’t follow any man but only followed Christ.

Paul began his response to those who claimed to be followers of a particular teacher by asking if Christ is divided. Romans 12:4-5 says, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” These verses remind us that we are all part of one body. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--.” This verse reminds us that there is only one head and that is Christ. Any time that a group of people in a church begin to follow some other leader instead of recognizing Christ as the head of the church, there will be conflicts and divisions. Paul reminded the people in Corinth that he had not been crucified for them and they had not been baptized in his name.

In fact Paul goes on to point out a very important lesson for us as well as for the people in Corinth. I 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 chose to let other believers do most of the baptizing so that people would not put their loyalty to him above their relationship with Christ. Acts 18:8 tells us that Crispus and his entire household were among the first in the city of Corinth to place their faith in Christ. Romans 16:23 says that Paul stayed at the home of Gaius the second time that he came to the city so he was probably also one of the first people in Corinth to place his faith in Christ.

However, once there were a few Christians that had been baptized in Corinth Paul had them baptize the others who became followers of Christ. In this way Paul modeled a very important principle. He quickly involved the new Christians and helped them to become recognized as a leadership team in the local church. It was people from the local congregation that began to do the baptizing instead of Paul. As a result, when Paul moved to other cities he left a leadership team to carry on the leadership of the churches. We see this illustrated in Acts 14:23 where we read, "So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed." One of the key responsibilities of any leader is to develop a leadership team for a local church so that those leaders will continue to lead the church.

Paul explained why he did what he did and why he did not do certain things in I Corinthians 1:17. That verse says, "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect." Here we see that Paul said that there were two things that the Lord did not send him to do. Christ did not send him to do all of the baptizing. Christ did not send him to show off his wisdom and intelligence. If Paul would have done all of the baptizing, the church would not know what to do when he moved on to establish churches in other cities. If Paul would have tried to show the people that he had great wisdom and intelligence others would not have felt that they could lead the church when the Lord moved Paul to the next city.

Instead Paul said that what he was sent to do was to preach the Gospel. God had sent him to make the message of the cross effective among the Gentiles. This will be explained more fully in our next topic. However, this is a great reminder to each of us as we help our physical and spiritual children become effective in their service for the Lord. We want to help them remember that as they talk to people that are not Christians that it is important to remember that the Lord has commissioned every Christian to share the message of the death and resurrection of Christ. That is the message that will change and transform lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to share the message of the cross effectively.

2.

Contrasting Godly Wisdom and Human Wisdom

We concluded our last topic by learning that Paul said that the Lord had sent him to preach the message of the cross. He was not to use human wisdom to try and impress people with his speech. Instead he was to focus on the preaching of the cross. As we begin our topic today we will see why that message is so important. We will also see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the difference between godly wisdom and human wisdom so that we will help them to understand the importance of sharing godly wisdom with others.

We live in a day when many religious leaders do not want to talk about the cross. As we read I Corinthians 1:18-19 we see why they do not want to talk about the cross. Those verses say, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.'" These verses help us to explain to our children why many religious leaders do not like to talk about the cross. God says that the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. As a result, this verse tells us that those who do not like to talk about the cross avoid that topic because they are perishing. They have never placed their faith in Christ and so they have no desire to talk to others about the purpose of the cross because they have never accepted the message of the cross for their own lives.

In contrast, for those of us who have placed our trust in Christ, we understand why it is so important to talk about the cross. We realize our salvation is due to the death of Christ on the cross and the fact that the Father showed that He was satisfied with the blood that Christ shed for our sin by His death. The Father showed this satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. As a result, the message of the cross reminds us daily that through the cross Christ defeated sin and provided eternal life to all who place their faith in Christ for salvation. Only those who have received this eternal life can have the wisdom of God in them. I Corinthians 2:10 says, "But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." We are able to receive godly wisdom because we have believed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

James 3:14-15 tells us what the wisdom of this world is like. Those verses say, "But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic." We see that God promises that one day He will destroy the wisdom of the world. We also see that worldly understanding will be done away with and brought to nothing. The word that is translated "prudent" here speaks of the educated or those who think that they are intelligent. Matthew 11:25 uses the same word when it says, "At that time Jesus answered and said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.'" Those who depend on their own knowledge will never be able to stand before God.

I Corinthians 1:20 goes on to say, "Where *is* the wise? Where *is* the scribe? Where *is* the

disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" The word that is translated "wise" speaks of those the world considers highly educated. It is used four times in I Corinthians 3:18-20 where we read, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Here we see that God says that those thoughts that are based on human wisdom are futile or empty.

The scribes were those who served as recorders or made copies of books of the Old Testament during the time of Christ. Because of the fact that they often copied books of the Old Testament, they were considered those who could answer the most difficult questions. A disputer was a person who argued philosophy. God said He is the One who has made the wisdom of the world foolishness. God is the One who can silence this worldly wisdom. When Peter and John were speaking before the top religious leaders in Jerusalem, Acts 4:13 says, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus." The wisdom of this world does not compare with the wisdom of God.

I Corinthians 1:21-22 says, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom." Here we see that all forms of human wisdom could never help people to know God. That is still true today. Since our children cannot help people to know God through human wisdom that is why it is important to help our children understand how God has chosen to help people come to the point where they will believe.

We see that God has chosen to save those who believe through the foolishness of the message preached. Paul explained the message that he preached in I Corinthians 2:2 where he said, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified." The word translated "preached" means to proclaim as a herald and includes both speaking publicly and speaking to individuals. Whether we are speaking in public or talking to individuals in their homes or some other place, we still are to share the same message. That is the message of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We go on to see that different people seek different things in their search for understanding in life. I Corinthians 1:22-24 says, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." We see that the Jews wanted a sign before they would believe something. That is the reason why God gave signs for the Jews. Hebrews 2:3-4 says, "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?" Since the apostles heard Christ and were chosen to be witnesses of His resurrection, God verified the testimony of the apostles about the resurrection by signs, wonders and various miracles.

Since God verified the ministry of the apostles with signs, wonders and miracles, Satan will also try to verify the ministry of the antichrist with signs, wonders and miracles. II Thessalonians 2:8-10 says, “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. The coming of the *lawless one* is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.” We see that Satan is already working to prepare the world to look for signs.

In contrast to the Jew, the Greeks looked for wisdom. Since Corinth was a Greek city, we will see in our next two topics that the Lord used Paul to explain in more detail the source of godly wisdom. Paul said that mature Christians will not depend on either signs or human wisdom for their message to the world. Instead mature Christians will preach Christ crucified. To Jews without Christ the message of the cross is a stumbling block. To Greeks without Christ the message of the cross is foolishness. However, to both Jews and Gentiles that are called by God, the message of the death and resurrection of Christ reveals both the power of God and the wisdom of God. That is why we want to help our children learn to focus on the cross rather than either signs or human wisdom.

I Corinthians 1:25 goes on to help us understand why God wants us to help our children learn to focus on the death and resurrection of Christ as they share the Gospel with others. That verse says, “Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” Here we see the way that God has chosen to share the message of the cross. The cross reveals the holiness of God because it shows that it is necessary for sin to be paid for by death. 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.” There is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood. At the same time the cross reveals the love of God because all those who repent of their sin of unbelief are granted eternal life as a free gift. Titus 2:13-14 says, “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.” Christ redeemed us from every sin and purified us.

We also want to help our children understand that the weakness of God is stronger than men so that nothing can separate us from the love of God once we place our faith in Christ. Romans 8:37-39 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Lord will greatly use our physical and spiritual children as they share the message of the cross. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to share godly wisdom through the message of the cross.

3.

Understanding How God Chooses People

In our last topic we saw there is a great difference between human wisdom and godly wisdom. As a result, the world thinks that godly wisdom is foolishness. However, once we place our faith and trust in Christ, we begin to understand godly wisdom and we realize the tremendous importance of the message of the cross. We want to help our children understand godly wisdom. Today in our topic we are going to see that the world looks at certain things when it chooses people. In contrast, we are going to see that God looks at very different things when He chose people for salvation. The way that God chooses to work in our lives leaves us with no room to glory in our own efforts.

In I Corinthians 1:26 we read, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called.*" Here we see that the way that God chose people is different than the way that the world chooses people. We see that God does not call many people because of their human wisdom, their human power or their human position in life. In fact II Timothy 1:8-9 says, "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began." We want to help our children understand that God called us with a holy calling based on His own purpose.

In contrast to the world, I Corinthians 1:27-29 says, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." Here we see that God chose us in a different way than the world chooses because He wanted to show the powerlessness of the things that the world uses to choose people.

First, we see that God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise. The world depends on human wisdom. In contrast I Corinthians 3:18-20 says, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Here we see that the world commonly deceives itself. It looks to people that have worldly wisdom for guidance. In contrast, God says that we need to become a fool to become wise. God says that the thoughts of the worldly wise are useless and have no purpose.

Second, we see that God chose the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty. The word that is translated "weak" means feeble or without strength. Romans 5:6 says, "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Christ died for us at the time when we had no strength. In contrast, God says those who are depending

on human strength today are lacking spiritual strength and so they have no real strength. The word that is translated “mighty” speaks of human strength. Luke 11:21-22 says, “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.” God says that the person that depends on great human strength will be put to shame.

Third, we see that God has chosen the base things of the world. The word that is translated “base” means those who are low born or those whose families are not even recognized by most of the people. Gideon is an illustration of such a person. In Judges 6:12 we read, “And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him, and said to him, “The LORD *is* with you, you mighty man of valor!” Then Gideon answered in Judges 6:15, “So he said to Him, “O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house.” Gideon looked at how the people viewed him and his family. God looked at what He was going to cause Gideon to become as Gideon yielded to the Lord.

Fourth, we see that God has chosen the things which are despised. The word that is translated “things which are despised” means something that is so despised that it is treated with contempt. This word is used in Luke 18:9-13 where we read, “Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’” The Pharisee certainly despised the tax collector and treated him with contempt. The Pharisees continually complained because Christ welcomed tax collectors and sinners and even ate with them. God chose differently than the Pharisees.

Fifth, we see that God has chosen the things that are not to bring to nothing the things that are. The word that is translated “not” is used to make something a negative. It is used in verse ten of this chapter to say that there should be no divisions in the church at Corinth. It is used in verse thirty of this chapter to say that no flesh should glory in His presence. In contrast, the word that is translated “nothing” means to deprive of force, influence or power. God uses those that the world considers of no value to take away the influence of those that have had great power and influence. We see that God wants to make it clear for all to see that no one will be able to boast about their own efforts throughout eternity.

We go on to see that God has given us more than just salvation. I Corinthians 1:30-31 says, “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.” These verses show us that God gave us four more things at the moment of salvation. We want to help our children understand each of these things that He has given us.

First, when we placed our trust in Christ, God gave us a measure of His wisdom. This means that every Christian is given some of the wisdom of God at the moment of salvation. God also

wants us to continue to grow in His wisdom. Proverbs 2:6 says, “For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth *come* knowledge and understanding.” As we grow in the wisdom of God, James 3:13 says, “Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.” Here we see that godly wisdom will be shown by our good conduct which will be carried out in the gentleness of godly wisdom. James 3:17 also gives us a description of godly wisdom when it says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Godly wisdom will help our children to develop a ministry that is pleasing to the Lord and has a powerful impact on others.

Second, when we placed our trust in Christ, God gave us the righteousness of Christ. In II Corinthians 5:21 we read, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” God put our sin on Christ even though He was without sin. That meant that Christ became sin for us. As a result, at the moment of salvation, God placed the righteousness of Christ on us. Because of this exchange God now sees us with the righteousness of Christ instead of seeing us in our own sin. We want to help our children understand how God now views them as He sees them with the righteousness of Christ.

Third, when we placed our trust in Christ, God placed the holiness of Christ on us. Romans 6:19-22 says, “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. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things *is* death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.” Before we placed our trust in Christ we were slaves of sin. We want to help our children understand that now that they are in Christ that He makes it possible for their lives to produce the fruit of holiness as our lives bear the fruit of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23.

Fourth, when we placed our trust in Christ, God provided us with redemption through Christ. The word “redemption” means that we were set free from the penalty of sin by the payment of a ransom. The price that Christ paid in order to set us free was His blood. I Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Christ did not pay for redemption with money. Instead He paid for our redemption with His precious blood. That is why the Father could give us eternal life. As we help our physical and spiritual children understand what God did when He chose and called us, they will understand why we should glory in the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn why they should glory in what the Lord has done for them.

4.

Helping Faith Stand in the Power of God

In our last topic we saw that God does not choose people in the same way that the world chooses people. In fact we see that God determined before the creation of the world to choose people for different reasons than the reasons people choose others. We also saw that God did more for us than just provide salvation. Today in our topic we want to focus on how to help our physical and spiritual children stand in the power of the Lord instead of standing in human strength. This is essential if we are going to help our children develop an effective ministry for the Lord.

In I Corinthians 2:1-2 we read, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Paul had brought the Gospel to the city of Corinth. We see that he did not depend on his speaking ability or even his wisdom as he brought the message of forgiveness of sins to the people of Corinth. The word that is translated “excellence” speaks of superior or elevated. As a result, Paul is saying that he did not use words that would make him sound superior or better than the people of Corinth. Instead he spoke with a humble attitude. Here we see that his attitude was in direct contrast to the Greek philosophers.

Paul also said that he did not depend on human wisdom as he spoke to the people in Corinth. Paul knew that the wisdom of God is much greater than the wisdom of people. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Here we see that Paul chose to share the Word of God instead of the words of people. In the same way we want to show our children by our example how to speak with a humble attitude and to speak the Word of God instead of our own words.

As Paul spoke to the people of Corinth, he shared the testimony that God had given about His Son. The word that is translated “determined” means to resolve, to determine or to pass judgment. Paul had come to Corinth from Athens. He had seen the desire of the people there to want to discuss various ideas about philosophy and religion. Paul did not desire to judge the people of Corinth. Instead he wanted them to have the opportunity to hear about the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul understood the meaning of I Corinthians 1:18 that says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” He knew that they had not yet heard the Gospel. He knew that some would reject but that others would respond to the power of God working in their lives. We want to help our children realize the importance of focusing on the message of the death and resurrection of Christ when they are talking to people that have not yet placed their faith in Christ.

Paul did not depend on his own strength as he came to share the Gospel in Corinth. In I Corinthians 2:3-5 we read, “I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And

my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” Paul may well have had reasons why he came to them in weakness. He had recently been beaten in Philippi, forced to flee from Thessalonica and Berea and mocked while he was in the city of Athens. However, the things that had happened to him in the previous few months did not hinder or stop him from sharing the Gospel with the people of Corinth.

We also see that Paul did not depend on the persuasive words of human wisdom as he preached the Gospel to the Corinthians. Instead Paul clearly and simply explained the Gospel. Acts 18:4 says, “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.” Paul did not try to convince people to place their faith in Christ by using human wisdom or human arguments. Instead Paul depended on the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power by working in their lives. This is an important lesson that we want to help our children understand so that they will not depend on their own speaking ability to change people. Instead we want to help them understand the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to demonstrate His power by working in the lives of those with whom they share the Gospel.

Paul explained why it is important to make certain that we help our children to understand the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the power of God. Otherwise people will base their faith on the wisdom of men. In contrast, the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces people of their spiritual need. John 16:7-11 says, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” When the Holy Spirit does the convicting, people will base their faith on the power of God and not the wisdom of men.

Paul did share wisdom with the people to whom he ministered. However, he chose to share the wisdom of God instead of sharing the wisdom of men. I Corinthians 2:6-8 says, “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” In the same way, we want to help our children learn to share the wisdom of God from the Word of God instead of sharing their own opinions.

The word that is translated “mature” means those who are full grown or adults. As it is used here it speaks of those who have become mature Christians and not new or struggling Christians. The word that is translated “wisdom” speaks of knowledge that covers many different things and also speaks of the knowledge that belongs to God. As a result, Paul pointed out the fact that we want to share the wisdom of God with those who are mature to equip them for effective ministry for the Lord. Paul made it clear that we do not want to share the wisdom of this age.

In fact I Corinthians 2:12-13 tell us how to help our children learn to speak the wisdom of God. Those verses say, “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.” The Holy Spirit does not teach us through human wisdom. Instead the Holy Spirit teaches us by comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

Two key passages that help our children to understand how the Holy Spirit compares spiritual things with spiritual are the following. II 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 men who wrote the Bible were moved by the Holy Spirit. II Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” These verses tell us that God uses all Scripture to help Christians become mature and equipped for every good work.

The word that is translated “mystery” in the Bible means something that God has hidden from the unbelieving but reveals to those who have placed their faith in Christ. Luke 8:9-10 says, “Then His disciples asked Him, saying, “What does this parable mean?” And He said, “To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest *it is given* in parables, that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.” Paul shows us in Ephesians 3:3-5 that mystery can also mean something that was previously hidden that is now revealed. Those verses say, “How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets.” Here we see that many things were revealed in the New Testament that had been hidden in the Old Testament. God hid this wisdom in the time of the Old Testament and chose to reveal it to those who become mature Christians in the New Testament.

God said that the rulers of the world did not understand the wisdom of God. In fact they could not know that wisdom because they had not placed their faith in the Lord. God said that if the rulers of this world would have placed their faith in Christ that they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. That is why we read what Christ said as He prayed in Luke 23:34, “Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” We want to help our children understand the wisdom of God so that as they share the message of faith they will share it so that people will stand in the power of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to share the Word of God so that the faith of others will stand in the power of God.

5.

Understanding the Source of Godly Wisdom

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our children learn how to help others so that the faith of others will stand in the power of God and not be based on human wisdom. In order to equip our physical and spiritual children to help the faith of others stand in the power of God, we have to help them learn to minister to others using the Word of God instead of sharing their own opinions. Today we are going to build on that topic to help our children grow in their understanding of the source of godly wisdom. This will help them learn to work in the power of the Holy Spirit as they share the Word of God with others.

Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4 to help us understand the source of godly wisdom. That quotation in I Corinthians 2:9 says, “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” We finished our last topic by seeing that we are to share the wisdom of God with others instead of our own opinions. In this verse we see that we cannot receive godly wisdom through an earthly method. We cannot learn the wisdom of God by what we see. We cannot learn the wisdom of God by what we hear. In fact we cannot even learn the wisdom of God by meditating in our heart on the things that we see and hear in the world around us.

In order for us to receive the wisdom of God that He has prepared for us, I Corinthians 2:10-12 says, “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 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.” Here we see that God reveals the wisdom of God to us through His Spirit. That is why it is only possible for Christians to receive the wisdom of God.

We see why God chooses to reveal His wisdom through the Holy Spirit. We see that the Holy Spirit searches all things including the deep things of God. The word that is translated “revealed” means to make known something that was previously unknown. God chose to reveal His truth to us through the Holy Spirit. Christ said in John 14:26, “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.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit is the one who teaches us all things including the wisdom of God. Christ also promised that the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance the things that Christ taught.

No other person can know what we are thinking in our human spirit. In the same way no one can know and understand the things of God except the Spirit of God. That is why the teaching of the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential both for us and for our physical and spiritual children. Without the Holy Spirit to teach our human spirit we will never understand the wisdom of God. Some Christians have been taught very little about the Holy Spirit. As a result, they depend on themselves to try to understand and teach spiritual truth. John 15:26-27 says, “But when the

Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” Only as we depend on the Holy Spirit will we be effective in sharing the wisdom of God with others.

That is why we were given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. I Corinthians 2:13-14 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” Just as Paul said about himself, we want to help our children learn to speak what the Holy Spirit teaches and not depend on their own wisdom. In order to teach our children how to speak what the Holy Spirit teaches, we also have to depend on the Holy Spirit so that we provide an example by speaking what the Holy Spirit speaks.

We see that the Holy Spirit teaches us by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. We need to pray both for ourselves and for our physical and spiritual children the same prayer that Paul prayed in Colossians 1:9-12 where we read, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” We see that we can only be filled with the knowledge of the will of God as He gives us spiritual wisdom and understanding. Spiritual wisdom helps us to understand the principles of the Word of God. Understanding helps us to apply those principles to our daily lives.

As we learn to understand the principles of the Word of God and learn to apply them to our daily lives, we learn to live a life that is worthy of the Lord. As we ask the Lord for strength, He gives us the strength to please Him in every way. The result is that the Lord will cause our lives to bear fruit in every good work. He will cause us to grow in our knowledge of God. This will happen because the Lord will strengthen us with His power. The Lord will also give us great patience and longsuffering as we grow in our obedience to His principles. As a result, we are able to give thanks with joy to the Father and look forward to our eternal inheritance. Our own growth also gives our children an example to follow as they grow in their lives. This shows us why it is so important to let the Holy Spirit help us learn to compare spiritual things with spiritual.

We also see that the natural man or person that is not a Christian does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Before we placed our faith in Christ, we were spiritually dead. That is why we could not understand spiritual truth. However, at the moment of salvation we received spiritual life and the Holy Spirit immediately began to help us understand spiritual truth. Since the person that is not a Christian has no spiritual life, it is impossible for that person to receive spiritual truth. That is why the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to the person that is not a Christian. That is why a person that is not a Christian cannot understand spiritual truth. Spiritual truth can only be examined and understood with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In contrast, I Corinthians 2:15-16 says, "But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is *rightly* judged by no one. For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ." A person that is spiritual is a person that is yielding his or her human spirit to the Holy Spirit. That is why Paul said in I Corinthians 3:1, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ." Here we see that these verses tell us that people have one of three different levels of spiritual life or lack of it. The natural person has no spiritual life and is spiritually dead. The carnal person has spiritual life but acts like a person that is not even a Christian because that person is very immature spiritually. The spiritual person is the person that is yielding his or her spirit to the Holy Spirit and is developing spiritual wisdom and understanding.

The person that is spiritual judges or examines all things. We help our children learn to examine all things by helping them learn to examine each thing that they think, hear or see by the Word of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians in II Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." In these verses we see how to help our children become spiritual people. We help them learn to examine each of their thoughts by the Word of God so that their thoughts more and more become the thoughts of God instead of human opinions. People who are not believers and lack spiritual life will not be able to examine and understand the nature of those who are spiritual people.

In contrast, as we help our children learn to become spiritual people they are able to understand the mind of the Lord. The word that is translated "the mind" twice in verse 16 is used four times in I Corinthians 14 where it is translated "understanding". I 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." Then I Corinthians 14:19 adds, "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." We see that the reason spiritual people are able to understand the mind of the Lord is because the Lord gives spiritual understanding.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children develop spiritual understanding. These verses show us that then they will be able to pray with understanding, sing with understanding and teach with understanding. That spiritual understanding will help our children to serve the Lord with godly wisdom. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to develop godly wisdom as they yield to the Holy Spirit.

6.

Understanding What Prevents Spiritual Growth

In our last topic we saw that there are three kinds of spiritual understanding. Those who are not Christians have no spiritual understanding because they are spiritually dead. Those who are carnal Christians lack spiritual understanding because they are spiritually very immature. Those who have spiritual understanding receive that understanding from the Holy Spirit because they are yielding their human spirit to the Holy Spirit. In our topic today we will learn some key lessons about the reason that Christians can remain as carnal Christians and not develop spiritual understanding.

In I Corinthians 3:1-2 we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able.” Chapter two concludes by saying that the spiritual person can examine all things and will have the mind of Christ to understand those things. However, Paul then went on to say in these verses that he could not speak to the Corinthians as spiritual people because they were still carnal. The word that is translated “carnal” means a person that is governed by their human nature and not by the Spirit of God.

Paul says that Christians who are governed by their human nature and not by the Spirit of God are spiritual babes. The word that is translated “babes” means a young child that is not able to speak clearly. This same word is used in three other passages to describe this level of spiritual maturity – I Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14. When we take those three passages plus the first three verses in this chapter we are given ten characteristics of the spiritual babe (toddler) that is not able to speak clearly. Those ten characteristics are:

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

As you can see from the ten characteristics listed above, the spiritual toddler gives very little evidence of spiritual life. That is why the spiritual toddler needs spiritual milk instead of spiritual food. Spiritual milk is exactly what is needed for the person who is a new Christian. I Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” However, the problem comes when new Christians do not grow and continue to need spiritual milk long beyond the time that they are new Christians. That was what had happened to the Christians in Corinth.

In I Corinthians 3:3-4 we see how the Corinthians were acting because they had not grown and become spiritual children, spiritual young men or spiritual parents. Those verses say, "For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I *am* of Apollos," are you not carnal?" The word that is translated "envy" means a severe form of selfishness. The word that is translated "strife" means contention or arguing. Here we see that when Christians do not experience healthy spiritual growth that they remain spiritually immature and continue to act like mere men. The word that is translated "divisions" means that they were splitting into different groups and fighting against each other. Here we see that severe selfishness will always lead to arguments and will eventually cause divisions that divide a church. Many of the people in the church in Corinth all claimed to follow a particular teacher instead of following the Lord.

Paul rebukes that choosing of favorite teachers by asking the question in I Corinthians 3:5 where we read, "Who then is Paul, and who *is* Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?" The word that is translated "ministers" means those servants who carry out the commands of another. This means that it is important to understand who has the authority to give those commands. In Matthew 28:18 Christ said, "And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth." Here we see that Christ has been given all authority both in heaven and on earth. As a result, Paul said that he and Apollos were servants who were carrying out the commands of Christ when they shared the Gospel with the people of Corinth. The Lord had used Paul's obedience to Him to lead the Corinthians to place their faith in Christ. The Lord had used the obedience of Apollos to help them in their growth.

In I Corinthians 3:6-8 Paul went on to write, "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. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." Paul made it very clear that he and Apollos were not in competition with each other. In fact they were just carrying out the ministry that the Lord had committed to each of them to do. Paul had come first and had shared the Word of God with the Corinthians. Later Apollos came and helped them to grow. Acts 18:27-28 says of Apollos, "And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace; for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ." Here we see that the Lord had used the ministry of Apollos in a powerful way to help the Corinthians grow.

Paul said that the key was the fact that the Lord was the One that gave Paul and Apollos their ministries. He said twice that God was the One who was giving the increase. He said that there should not be a focus on either the one who planted or the one who watered. Instead the focus should be on the Lord who was giving the increase. We need that same reminder today. Because of our modern communication such as radio and television, many people have become followers of a particular teacher instead of following the Lord. Paul said that we need to get our focus off the men and back where it should be on the Lord. This is a key lesson that we need to teach our children.

Paul said that both the one that plants and the one that waters are one. Here we see that an effective ministry is a team ministry where each person is carrying out the ministry that the Lord designed and equipped them to do. However, the Lord is the head from whom they receive their ministries. 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 the Head and each part of the body is to carry out the ministry that the Lord has designed each of us to do. We are also reminded that each person will be rewarded according to what he or she has done. This will be explained much more fully in our next topic.

We go on to see our relationship as workers for the Lord. I Corinthians 3:9-10 says, "For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it." We see that as we serve the Lord that we are all fellow workers. In any field the different workers are assigned different responsibilities by the person that is in charge. In the same way we are to realize that we are just fellow workers doing what Christ has equipped each of us to do. The key thing is that we are obedient to Him.

We want to help our children to realize that the Lord has given each of them a different ministry. We want to help them realize that they are working together to carry out the work of the Lord. We see that the Lord uses two different pictures to help us understand our work as we serve Him. First we are all working in God's field. Second, we are all working to build God's building. We are also told how God builds His building.

Paul said that God had given him the privilege of helping to lay the foundation of God's building which is the church. Here we see that the Lord equips some people to start churches in places where there are no churches. Paul said in Romans 15:20, "And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation." Once Paul had churches established in an area, he moved to another area to repeat the same process. Paul said that God had given Apollos the privilege of building on that foundation. Paul said that each of them had been given their responsibility according to God's grace.

This is an important thing to help our children understand. Nothing that we do is for our own glory. Instead everything that we do is to be for glory of God. For that reason we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that they need to pay careful attention to the way that we build God's building. We will all be accountable to the Lord for the way that we build. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to work as a team in building the Lord's building.

7.

Understanding How to Build on a Firm Foundation

In our last topic we saw that we are to help all Christians grow to spiritual maturity so that each one can have a part in building God's building, the church. Christ is the One who is the foundation of the church. He chooses to give us the privilege of building on that foundation. We also see that God will reward us according to the way that we build on that foundation. For that reason, we need to show our children the importance of asking the Lord to give us His strength so that we can be effective builders as we build on a firm foundation. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In I Corinthians 3:11 we read, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Here we see that Christ is the chief cornerstone and foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:19-22 says, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Here we see that God is causing us to be built together as a place where the Holy Spirit can live on this earth. Instead of building a temple made of wood or bricks, God says that He is building every Christian so that together we can be the temple of God where the Holy Spirit lives. That is why the foundation for this building must be Christ.

We go on to see how we and our children are to build on this foundation. I Corinthians 3:12-13 says, "Now if anyone builds on this foundation *with* gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is." Here we see that God explains our service for Him in helping to build His church can be like gold, silver and precious stones or our service can be like wood, hay and stubble. Fire refines and purifies gold, silver and precious stones. Fire quickly burns up wood, hay and stubble. Here we see that our service for God in helping to build His temple can be lasting and effective or it can be gone in a moment.

God also says that the service or works of each Christian will become clear because our works as Christians will be tested by fire. God said that this fire will make it clear what our works on this earth have been like. Some works are temporary because they will only last as long as the earth lasts. Other works will endure for all eternity. We see here that both are temporary works and our lasting works will be tested by fire. II Peter 3:10 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." Any works that are like wood, hay and stubble will quickly be gone. Any works that are like gold, silver and precious stones will be eternal.

In I Corinthians 3:14-15 we read, "If anyone's work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved,

yet so as through fire.” Our works that we build on the foundation of Christ will endure and last for eternity. We read that Christ promises that we will receive a reward for any works that last and endure. We see that Christ is eager to give us rewards. Matthew 10:42 says, “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold *water* in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” We can have joy as we know that the Lord is going to reward us for any lasting service that is done in His name.

In contrast, those works that were only for this earth will be quickly gone like wood, hay and stubble when they are burned. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, many of their works were like wood, hay and stubble because they were not growing to maturity. As a result, their works were done to please themselves on this earth and had no eternal value. God said that such works will not last because they are not built on Christ. The Christian that has no works of eternal value will see everything that he did after he became a Christian burned by fire. However, every person that has repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ will be saved. However, it will be as through fire because their works that were not lasting will be destroyed and will receive no eternal rewards.

Since Paul was confident that the Corinthians had truly placed their faith in Christ even though they were not growing to spiritual maturity, He asked all those who were true Christians two questions. I Corinthians 3:16-17 says, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which *temple* you are.” The first question was, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God?” We want to help our children understand that their body is the temple of God. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here we see that it should be the desire of every Christian to bring glory to God both with the things that they do with their body and the things that control their lives in their human spirit.

The second question is, “Do you not know that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” Every Christian needs to understand that the Holy Spirit comes into his or her life at the moment of salvation. Romans 8:9 says that any person that does not yet have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them has not become a Christian yet. That verse says, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” In contrast, Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit is the down payment and eternal guarantee of our salvation until we get to heaven.

Paul also warned that if anyone defiles the temple of God that God will destroy that person. This is a warning to those who are not Christians and would try to destroy the church and any person that is a part of the church. Matthew 18:6-7 says, “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses!

For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" Here we see that God will judge those in the world who offend any Christian. God says that the temple of God, every Christian, is holy and He will judge anyone who tries to destroy His temple.

Paul also gave a warning to each Corinthian Christian not to deceive himself. I Corinthians 3:18-23 says, "Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their own craftiness"; and again, "The LORD knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours. And you *are* Christ's, and Christ *is* God's." This warning to the Corinthians is also a warning that we need to give to our physical and spiritual children. We need to warn them about the danger of deceiving themselves.

Here we see that Paul gives a summary of the first three chapters to help us understand how to build on a firm foundation. First, in I Corinthians 1:18-25 Paul warned about the dangers of depending on human wisdom. He pointed out in those verses that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of the world. Here we see that he warns again that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. We help our children to build on a firm foundation when we help them understand the importance of depending on godly wisdom instead of human wisdom. I Corinthians 1:27-29 says, "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." We want to help our children build their lives on godly wisdom.

Second, Paul said that we are not to boast about the teachings of any particular man if we are going to build on a firm foundation. Instead we want to help our children learn to build their service and work for the Lord on the foundation of Christ. The Lord is the Creator of all things. As a result, all things belong to Him. However, as His children we are promised that we will share His entire inheritance. Romans 8:16-17 promises, "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 we help our children build their lives and ministry on the firm foundation of Christ, we can share with them that just as we have suffered with Christ that we will also share in His glory. If we help our children learn to do service that is like gold, silver and precious stones, they can look forward to an eternal reward that will be given to them by Christ when they stand before Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help both your physical and spiritual children learn to focus on the things that are eternal in their lives and ministry.

8.

Understanding How to Be a Faithful Steward

In our last topic we saw that we are to build on the firm foundation of Christ. We saw that as Christians it should be our desire to build on that foundation the things that will last for eternity and not just be destroyed with the earth like wood, hay and stubble. In order to help our children grow in their understanding of the way that God works in and through their lives we need to help them understand that they are stewards of everything that the Lord has given them including their time, their spiritual gifts, their abilities and everything else that the Lord has given to them. Today we will focus in our topic on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be faithful stewards.

In I Corinthians 4:1-2 we read, “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.” In I Corinthians 3 Paul warned the Corinthians not to follow a particular teacher and claim to be a follower of Paul or Apollos. Here we see that Paul now tells them how they were to recognize Paul, Apollos or any other teacher. The word that is translated “servants” in this verse means under rowers. On the ships in that day they would often have two or three rows of rowers to help the ships move when there was no wind. The “under rowers” were the slaves who worked on the lowest level rowing these boats. As a result, Paul is saying that he and other teachers were nothing in themselves because everything that they taught had been given to them by Christ. This points out that a key characteristic of a teacher is an attitude of humility.

In addition to an attitude of humility, Paul said that they were stewards of the mysteries of God. A “steward” was a manager of something that belonged to someone else. Joseph gives us an example of a steward as he served in the house of Potiphar. Genesis 39:4 says, “So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority.” Although Joseph was a slave, he was given the responsibility to manage everything in the household of Potiphar. In the same way, Paul said that he and other servants of the Lord who proclaimed the Word and some even later wrote the New Testament had been entrusted with the mysteries of God.

We see that the most important requirement for a steward is that the steward is found faithful. Paul and all of the other New Testament writers had to be faithful to their master as they wrote what became the New Testament. In the same way as we now teach the Word of God that was written down, we are also stewards. We see that our most important responsibility is to be faithful to the Lord because He is our Master. Just as Paul and others were faithful as they wrote the Word of God, we are to be faithful and teach the Word accurately as we teach the Word of God. As we help our physical and spiritual children develop the ministries that the Lord gives them, we want to help them understand that they are also stewards of God and are accountable to Him.

In the case of Paul, we see that he was doing everything that he did to be faithful as a steward. I Corinthians 4:3-5 say, “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by

a human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. For I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this; but He who judges me is the Lord. 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." Paul was not concerned about whether he pleased other people.

However, he was very concerned to make certain that he pleased God as the steward of God. That is why he said it did not matter to him if the Corinthians or a human court tried to judge him. In fact he said that he did not even judge himself. Instead of judging himself or his own motives for serving the Lord, Paul looked forward to the day when he would be judged for his rewards by the Lord. Romans 14:10-12 says, "But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God." So then each of us shall give account of himself to God." In the same way we want our children to look forward to the day when they stand before the Lord so that the Lord can determine for what works He can reward them.

Paul said that as far as he knew he did not have any wrong motives as he served the Lord. However, he realized that even though he thought that he had the right motives in his daily service for the Lord, that his own thoughts did not really matter. What did matter to Paul was the fact that He would one day have his motives for service judged by the Lord and he wanted to please the Lord in that day. In the same way we want to help our children realize that it does not matter when people try to judge their motives for serving the Lord. However, it will matter to them a great deal when they stand before the Lord because He is the One who can judge the true motives of their hearts in their service for the Lord.

We see that this is why we should encourage our physical and spiritual children to be faithful stewards of the Lord. Then they will not spend their time here on this earth trying to judge their own motives for serving the Lord. Instead they will have peace because they know that the Lord will examine their works and the reasons why they did those works so that He can reward them. The Lord will bring their works into the light and examine them in the light. He will reveal the reasons why we served the Lord and reward us accordingly because He will know the motives of our heart even though others may misunderstand why we do what we do. The key thing that we want to help our children understand is the importance of living day by day to please the Lord. Then at the time that God rewards us for our works, we will receive our praise from God because He will reveal why we did what we did as He rewards us.

We see that both Paul and Apollos give us examples of what it means to be faithful stewards. In I Corinthians 4:6-8 we read, "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ *from another*? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive *it*, why do you boast as if you had not received *it*? You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!" Paul and Apollos had been like faithful farmers who had planted and

watered the seed of the Word of God. They had been faithful builders in building on Christ as their foundation. Paul and Apollos had been faithful stewards as they carried out of the ministry that the Lord had given to them. They had done all of these things with godly humility.

However, Paul did not want the Corinthians to give either he or Apollos more honor than what the Scriptures said they should be given. Paul summarized the way that he had served the Lord when he said in Acts 20:19, "Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews." Peter had shown the same attitude when he went to the house of Cornelius. Acts 10:25-26 says, "As Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped *him*. But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself am also a man." The apostles showed true humility and did not want to be treated with special honor or worship.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to develop this same attitude of humility. He did not want them to be proud and puffed up in their lives. That is why he told them that they were not to be puffed up one against the other. Paul said that none of them were greater than any other Christian so that they should be preferred above another Christian. He reminded them that every spiritual gift or ability that we receive has been given to us by the Lord and we are to be good stewards of what the Lord has placed in our lives. Paul reminded them that if the Lord had placed gifts and abilities in their lives that they were not to boast. They had received all that they had from the Lord and so all glory should go to the Lord. We want to model this attitude of humility so that our physical and spiritual children also have an example to follow in their own lives.

To help the Corinthians understand Paul spoke the kind of the false praise that they wanted from others to help them realize that such praise means nothing. I Corinthians 4:8 says, "You are already full! You are already rich! You have reigned as kings without us--and indeed I could wish you did reign, that we also might reign with you!" They were full but they were full of pride and acted like they were very mature spiritually when in actual fact Paul had said in chapter three that they were spiritual toddlers. They were rich but they measured their success in worldly riches instead of spiritual riches.

They wanted to reign like kings so that they could boast about their power. Christ had spoken to this very attitude when He had answered the request of James and John to sit on his right hand and his left hand in His glory in Mark 10:35-45. He told them in verses 43-45, "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." Paul did desire for himself and the Corinthians that they would reign with Christ. However he wanted to reign with Christ but as the bondservant of Christ so that Christ would receive all of the glory. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children by your example that you also want to reign with Christ as one of His bondservants so that Christ receives all of the glory.

9.

Learning to Lead with Humility and Patience

In our last topic we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example what it means to be a faithful steward of Christ. In New Testament times a steward was a leader because he was managing what belonged to another person and many times had other people working with him to carry out his responsibilities. At the same time the steward was also a slave of his master and had to give an account of his stewardship to his master. Some of those who were stewards and slaves of others had also become Christians. As a result, such people were slaves and at the same time leaders. As Christians, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be bondslaves of Christ at the same time they are leading others. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Paul understood what it meant to be a bondsman of Christ at the same time that he was leading others. Paul rebuked the Christians in Corinth as we finished our last topic for their pride, their desire for success by worldly standards and their desire for power. Now we see that Paul contrasts the attitudes of the apostles with the attitudes of the Corinthian Christians. I Corinthians 4:9-10 says, "For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. We *are* fools for Christ's sake, but you *are* wise in Christ! We *are* weak, but you *are* strong! You *are* distinguished, but we *are* dishonored!" Paul said that the apostles had been made a spectacle both to angels and to men.

The word that is translated "spectacle" means a place where people gathered for public entertainment. It came to speak of a prisoner that was brought into a Roman arena to fight either against other men or lions until the person died. As a result, it came to mean a man that was gazed at and made fun of as he was in the process of being killed by wild animals. Paul said that the Lord had chosen him and the other apostles to be mocked, imprisoned, beaten and be put to death in order to bring the Gospel to others. Paul said that this was done to the apostles in front of the world, people and angels. In this way the apostles had become fools, weak and despised for Christ. In contrast the Corinthian Christians wanted to be recognized by the world as wise, strong and honorable. Today we have many Christians who want to be like the Corinthians instead of the apostles.

Paul went on to explain other things that happened to the apostles as they suffered for Christ. I Corinthians 4:11-13 says, "To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and we are poorly clothed, and beaten, and homeless. And we labor, working with our own hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now." Paul and the other apostles had experienced hunger and thirst in order to take the Gospel to others. They often were poorly clothed as they went from place to place. Many times they were beaten and had no home. We see that they often worked to support themselves so that they could take the Gospel to others.

The apostles also experienced much rejection from others. Paul told how the apostles had

responded to various forms of rejection. The word that is translated “reviled” means to heap abuse upon a person. In I Peter 2:23 as we read about the sufferings of Christ, we read, “Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.” The apostles followed the example of Christ and chose to bless when they were reviled. When the apostles were persecuted they endured the suffering. When people spoke evil and blasphemed the apostles, they spoke to strengthen and encourage others. The apostles were treated like the garbage or the worst criminals of their day. The example of the apostles was a rather strong rebuke to the Corinthian Christians who were filled with pride, wanted worldly success and power over others.

Paul goes on to explain to the Corinthian Christians why he gave them this strong rebuke. I Corinthians 4:14-17 says, “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. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” The purpose of this rebuke was not to shame the Corinthians. Instead Paul considered the Corinthian Christians his beloved children and wanted to warn them.

The word that is translated “instructor” was used to describe a slave that raised a son for the father by severe discipline (the original use of this word was of a slave named Mentor). The word is used two other times in the New Testament in Galatians 3:24-25 where it is translated tutor, “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 showed us that we were sinners and needed to come to Christ for forgiveness. However, we see that once we placed our trust in Christ that we are no longer under the law. The laws never makes people do what is right. It only punishes them when they do wrong and break the law. Paul said that the Corinthians had lots of leaders that wanted to punish them for doing wrong.

In contrast, Paul said that he had begotten them through the Gospel. Here we see that instead of being a mentor who helped Christians grow through severe discipline, he had chosen to become a spiritual parent that would help the Corinthians grow in their spiritual life through love and example. That is why he called them his beloved children. That is why he invited them to imitate his example. In I Corinthians 11:1 Paul told the Corinthians why they could follow his example. That verse says, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” Paul could invite the Corinthians to imitate his lifestyle because he had chosen to imitate Christ in his own life. Here we see that Paul explains to us what it means for us to be spiritual parents. We choose to lead others by love and example. This will only happen as we lead others with great humility and patience.

Paul goes on to tell the Corinthians that this was the reason why he had sent Timothy to them. Paul had taken Timothy along with him as a team member and partner with Paul. Over the years that they traveled together Paul treated Timothy as a beloved son and a faithful partner in the service of the Lord and equipped him to carry on the same ministry to others. Paul said that Timothy would remind the Corinthians of his ways. The word that is translated “ways” was used to speak of a traveler as he journeyed or a course of conduct in the way a person carried on

his life. Since Timothy had traveled for several years with Paul, he could tell the Corinthians about the way that Paul carried on his life over a period of several years.

Timothy was able to remind the Corinthians of the conduct of Paul and the things that he taught because Paul had acted the same way wherever they went. He had taught the same message in every city that they visited. Paul summarized the life that he lived and the message that he taught as he talked with the elders of the church in the city of Ephesus. Acts 20:19-21 where we read, “Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” The conduct of Paul could be described by saying that he served the Lord with all humility and love wherever he went. His message was repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ wherever he went.

Since Paul had told the Corinthians that he treated them as beloved children, he asked them how they would like him to treat them when he made a return visit to Corinth. In I Corinthians 4:18-21 we read, “Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. For the kingdom of God *is* not in word but in power. What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?” A loving father has two primary ways that he shows his love to his children. If children are disobedient, he disciplines them. If children are obedient, the father is able to show a spirit of love and gentleness.

Some of the Corinthians were puffed up (proud) and acted like Paul would not come and visit them again. If it was the will of the Lord, Paul planned to come and visit the Corinthians again very soon. He said that at that time he would not evaluate those who were puffed up by their words but by the power of their character. When Paul later wrote II Corinthians he said in II Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” Here we see why Paul asked the Corinthians how they wanted him to come when he came. They could choose whether they wanted him to come with a spirit of discipline or a spirit of love and gentleness.

The very fact that Paul sent Timothy to the Corinthians showed his humility and patience. He wanted to give the proud Corinthian Christians time to turn from their pride and sin and get their heart attitudes right with the Lord so that Paul could come in a spirit of love and gentleness without a need to discipline his spiritual children. This is the same patience and love that we should show to our physical and spiritual children. May the Lord richly bless you as you show great patience to help your children grow spiritually.

10.

Learning to Deal with Sin in the Church

In our last topic we saw what it means to be a spiritual parent. We saw that in order to be a spiritual parent that we must have a spirit of patience and humility if we want to be effective in helping our physical and spiritual children to experience healthy growth. We will help them grow to spiritual maturity if we lead them with love and example. In cases where we have to discipline we will discipline with love. In our topic today we are going to see how to deal with sin in the church with a spirit of love. Only as we learn to discipline in love will that discipline be effective.

We have seen in the first chapters of I Corinthians that the church in Corinth had many problems in the church because many of the Christians were carnal and were living their lives like the people of the world. In fact I Corinthians 5:9 points out the fact that Paul had written an earlier letter about how to deal with sin in the church. I Corinthians 5:1-2 says, “It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.” Here we see that there was immorality in the church at Corinth. The kind of immorality that was being allowed in the church at Corinth was considered so wrong that it was even illegal under Roman law.

Here we see that a man was having sexual relationships with his father's wife. Even if this was the man's stepmother and not his own mother, this was still considered incest even under the Roman law. In addition to the sin of the man, we also see that it was causing other Christians to become puffed up or proud. This indicates that many of the other Christians knew the kind of sin that this man was committing. Since this was common knowledge in the church, the idols worshipers in the surrounding area probably also knew what was happening and were talking about the evilness of this sin. In contrast, the church had not even mourned or shown any sorrow that such a sin was being committed and the church was puffed up about it instead.

As a result, of their pride the church had taken no action to remove this man from their fellowship. Matthew 18:15-17 says, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” This man was sinning against the whole church and the church was doing nothing. As a result, the church had become puffed up instead of mourning about the sin and taking action to either restore or remove the man from the fellowship of the church even though Paul had previously written to the church.

Paul had written earlier to the Galatians in Galatians 6:1, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself

lest you also be tempted.” Paul had pointed out to the Galatians that if a person was caught in the very act of sin that the first thing that a church was to do was to seek to restore that person. This was to be done by Christians that were spiritual and not carnal because the first goal of a church should always be to restore. It was to be done by spiritual Christians so that they would seek to restore in a spirit of gentleness. Paul realized that an attitude of pride would cause those who were trying to restore to commit sin themselves. Since Paul had already previously written to the church in Corinth, he had probably shared some of the same principles that he had shared with the Galatians.

As a result, Paul told the church that it was now past time for the church to take action. In case there was any possibility that the church did not know how to exercise discipline by the whole church, we see that Paul here explained to the church exactly what to do to deal with their own pride and also remove this man from the fellowship of the church. I Corinthians 5:3-5 says, “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” Paul said that he was present in spirit even though he was not physically present. We also want to help our children know how to help a whole church take action when action is needed.

Paul said that the church was to gather together to take action to remove the sinning brother from their fellowship. He said that they were to act in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ and not in their own strength. He said that they were to deliver the guilty person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. In Job 1:9-10 we see that all true followers of the Lord have a hedge of protection from Satan around them. When a church takes action to deliver a person to Satan, that hedge of protection of that person is removed. That allows Satan to do whatever he desires to the physical body of that person. I Corinthians 11:28-31 show that such discipline by the church allows Satan to bring weakness, physical sickness and even physical death to such a person.

However, the goal of the Lord for any Christian is always restoration even when God allows Satan to destroy the physical body of a Christian. We see that even though Satan destroys the body the spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. The Lord will also stop Satan in his destruction of the flesh if there is repentance. This man did repent of his sin and the church was encouraged to restore him. II Corinthians 2:6-8 says, “This punishment which *was inflicted* by the majority *is* sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you *ought* rather to forgive and comfort *him*, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm *your* love to him.” Once the man repented, Paul made it very clear that now the responsibility of the church was to forgive, to comfort and to reaffirm their love to the brother that had sinned. We also want to help our children learn to restore a brother that has sinned.

Next Paul began to deal with the pride that the other Christians had shown as they had talked about this brother that was living in open rebellion against the Lord. In I Corinthians 5:6-8 we read, “Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.” Here Paul confronted the sin of the church when he said that their glorying was not good. He reminded them that a little leaven (yeast) will leaven the whole lump of dough. When a church does not deal with open sin in the church, that sin will spread to other Christians.

Paul also told the church how they were to deal with their own sin by reminding them that as Christians their glorying was not good as they talked about the man living in sin. Paul told them that they were to purge out the old leaven. In addition to delivering the rebellious person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that they were also to purge out the old leaven. This meant that they were to deal with the fact that as a church they were puffed up about what was happening in the church. As a church, they were to realize that they were truly unleavened.

In the Old Testament the Jews removed all leaven from their houses for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Christ is our Passover, He paid the penalty for our sins. II Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Christ became sin for us so that we could stand in the righteousness of Christ and not in our own sin. That is why it is important for us, our children and our church to realize the importance of daily cleansing from sin so that we are truly unleavened because of the daily cleansing of sin. This is also why we are to have a time of self examination and confession at each communion service of the church.

We see that we are to show our children by our example how to do two key things. First, we are to remove the leaven of malice and wickedness. The word that is translated “malice” speaks a desire to injure others or wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws. Here we see that two key situations where it is important to discipline a sinning person is when a person desires to injure others (often through false gossip) or those who choose to live in open rebellion against the Lord and are unwilling to deal with their sin. The word that is translated “wickedness” speaks of having evil purposes or desires. In Acts 3:26 we read, “To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one *of you* from your iniquities.” In this verse the word is translated iniquities and points out that the Father sent Christ to turn every one of us from our evil purposes and desires.

Second, we are to eat the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. The bread of sincerity speaks of purity of lives. This reminds us that our desire should be to live a continual life of purity before the Lord. We are also to conduct our lives according to the truth of the Word of God. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to deal with sin in the church, we want to show our children how to live lives that are an example for others to follow because they are living lives of purity before the Lord and walking according to the truth of the Word of God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to live a pure life and walk according to the truth of the Word of God.

11.

Learning to Reach Out to the World

In our last topic we saw that Paul explained to the Corinthians how to deal with open sin and rebellion in the church. He explained that they were to do two things. They were to discipline the guilty person by removing him from the fellowship of the church. Second they were to deal with their own pride that caused them to be puffed up about the open sin in the church. Paul had written the church earlier that they were to discipline a person that was living in open sin by removing that person from the fellowship of the church. The church has apparently misunderstood the instructions of Paul and had stopped having fellowship with people who were not Christians instead. As a result, our topic today will see how Paul corrected that misunderstanding in the church at Corinth.

In I Corinthians 5:9-10 we read, “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. Yet *I* certainly *did* not *mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.” Here we see that Paul makes a key distinction that is very important for all of us to realize today. He pointed out that we are to remove from the church Christians that continue to live in sinful rebellion. However, we are not to remove ourselves from people of the world that are not Christians that are committing the same sins. In fact he said it would be necessary for Christians to go out of the world to remove ourselves from people that are not Christians that are committing these sins.

This is where it is important for us to help our children understand the purpose why Christ even leaves us in the world once we become Christians. As Christ prayed the night before He was crucified, He said to the Father in John 17:15, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.” It is not the purpose of God to remove us from the world. However, it is the purpose of the Lord to protect us from the evil one.

Christ explained very clearly in the Sermon on the Mount the purpose why He does not take us out of the world when we become Christians. Matthew 5:13 says, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.” Christ leaves us as Christians in the world so that we can be salt to the world. Salt does many things. We will mention two. Salt creates thirst. We are to live our lives in such a way that we cause the people of the world to develop a thirst to know God. Salt is used to heal wounds. We are to share the message that will bring spiritual healing to those who are dead in their trespasses and sins.

Christ also said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Here we see that we are also to be lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-16 says, “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.” These verses tell us how we are to be lights in the world. We have to be in close enough contact with the people of the world that they can see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. In addition, we see that it is the attitudes that we have in our hearts that will determine the way that we show the light of Christ to the world around us.

Christ modeled for us how we impact the world around us by His own example. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Christ came and lived among the people of the world. As a result, the people of the world saw His glory. Christ also revealed the glory of the Father. Christ was full of grace and truth. In the same way we are to live among the people of the world to reveal the glory of God to the world by the way that we live to please Christ. The word that is translated “dwelt” means to have one’s tent among others. As a result, to live among the people of the world means to regularly spend time with people that are not Christians so that we can share the message of the Gospel with them. We are to live lives that are full of grace and truth as we spend time with the people that do not yet know Christ.

We are to follow the example of Christ and go to those who are not Christians and build a relationship with them so that we can share with them how to have forgiveness of sin and receive the gift of eternal life. Christ gave many examples of going to people where they were so that He could share with them how to receive forgiveness of sin and eternal life. In John 1 Christ went and found Philip. In John 4 Christ went to the well so that He could meet the Samaritan woman. In John 5 Christ went to the man at the pool of Bethesda. In John 9 Christ went to the man that was born blind. Christ also told us that we are to go to others and not wait for them to come to us. Mark 16:15 says, “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Some people may come to us but we are commanded to go to all.

The Pharisees often accused Christ of bring a friend of sinners. Matthew 9:10-11 says, “Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” In Luke 7:34-35 we read, “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’ But wisdom is justified by all her children.” Then Luke 15:1-2 says, “Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives sinners and eats with them.” We are to follow the example of Christ and spend time with sinners to help them learn about the love of Christ. We are to be a friend to sinners and create opportunities to eat and do other things with those who are not Christians so that we can share with them how to have forgiveness of sin.

In I Corinthians 5:11 we read, “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.” The word that is translated “to keep company with” is only used three times in the New Testament and two are in these verses. The third is II Thessalonians 3:14-15 where we read, “And if anyone does not obey our

word in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet do not count *him* as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” Here we see that it does not say that we are to totally avoid a Christian that is living in willful sin because then we could not admonish the person. However, what we are to avoid is spending time in fellowship with the person and especially we are to avoid eating meals together.

We see the reason for the difference in the two different ways that we respond in the next two verses. I Corinthians 5:12-13 says, “For what *have I to do* with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person.” We are not to judge those who are not Christians. If they continue to reject Christ, their judgment will come at the time that they stand before God at the final judgment. As a result, Christians are not to judge those who are outside the church. Instead we are to leave all such judgment to God.

In contrast, Christians are to judge a person that is a Christian that chooses to live in open sin and rebellion against the Lord by removing that person from the fellowship of the church. However, this is only to be done after first making every attempt to restore the sinning brother or sister. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who *are* spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Only went attempts to restore the person to a right relationship with the Lord fail are we to then apply Matthew 18:15-17. Those verses say, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' And if he refuses to hear them, tell *it* to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.” However, even in removal from the fellowship, our goal should always be to restore the person as we see in II Corinthians 2:6-8.

As we study these verses we see that we are to spend time regularly among people that are not Christians for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with them. At the same time we are to realize that there will be times when it is also necessary for a church to discipline a Christian that chooses to live in open rebellion against the Lord by avoiding fellowship with that person until there is repentance. It is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand this passage clearly so that they do not make the same mistake as the people at Corinth had made when they started avoiding those who were not Christians instead of exercising church discipline to a Christian living in open rebellion against the Lord. As we help our children learn to love those who are not Christians so that they go to them and share the Gospel and also help them learn to show love to rebellious Christians by disciplining them in love, we equip our children to share the love of Christ with others. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to show the love of Christ to all people.

12.

Learning to be Peacemakers

In our last topic we saw that we are to show our children how to reach out to the people of the world who do not know Christ. This is something that every Christian is to be shown how to do so that every Christian can learn to be obedient to the commands of Christ. As we show our physical and spiritual children how to build relationships with people that are not yet Christians, we help them learn to follow the example that Christ gave us when He was here on this earth. In our topic today we are going to see that the Lord also gives us instructions so that we can show our children how to become peacemakers.

In I Corinthians 6:1-4 we see that the church in Corinth was having a problem with lawsuits. Those verses say, “Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge?” Here we see that some Christians were suing other Christians in the Corinthian courts in an effort to try and get what they felt belonged to them. They were going to courts where the people who made the decisions were not even Christians instead of asking a few godly Christians to help them solve their conflicts. This meant that the whole city was hearing about the conflicts between the Christians.

Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that God has said that the saints will judge the world in the future. John later wrote in Revelation 2:26-27, “And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations--He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'--as I also have received from My Father.” Here we see that saints will have power over the nations. Certainly if Christians are going to rule the nations in the future a few of them should be able to settle small conflicts between Christians. In our day we see that one of the things that we want to show our children is how to help other Christians settle their conflicts without going to court and having lawsuits.

Paul also reminded the Corinthians that Christians will rule over angels in the future. If Christians will be given the responsibility to rule over angels in the future, Paul makes it clear that there should be at least a few Christians who are able to help Christians make wise decisions about the things that relate to the things that happen in this life. Other passages do not clearly say that we will judge angels. However, Hebrews 1:13-14 says, “But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” The words “ministering and minister” mean serving and serve. As a result, we see that the angels will serve those who will inherit salvation. Since we have become the children of God, we have become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ and have inherited salvation. This passage would show us that the angels will definitely serve Christians in the future although it does not directly state that we will judge them. As a result, we should be able to settle conflicts between Christians.

For that reason Paul makes it clear that Christians should be able to resolve the conflicts of other Christians. Judges who are not Christians will not use Biblical principles to solve conflicts between Christians because they do not even know those Biblical principles. In contrast, even the weakest Christian has learned a little from the Word of God. Even the weakest Christian also has the Holy Spirit living within him. As a result, even the weakest Christian should be able to help Christians in conflict learn to apply Biblical principles to their conflict. As a result, Paul went on to say in I Corinthians 6:5-6, “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!” Paul said that among the Christians there must certainly be at least one wise person that could solve a conflict between two Christians. Paul said that the Christians were going to law against each other before unbelievers.

Here we see that one of the ministries for which we want to equip our physical and spiritual children is to learn to develop the wisdom to be a peacemaker and help other Christians learn how to solve their conflicts. James 3:13 says, “Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom.” Here we see how we help our children to become people of wisdom that are able to help others. The word that is translated “understanding” is used only in this verse in the New Testament. It means a person that is able to skillfully apply the Word of God to practical situations. The word that is translated “meekness” means gentleness of spirit. We help our children develop understanding by helping them develop a gentle spirit.

James goes on to point out why people that are not Christians cannot demonstrate this kind of understanding and apply it with godly wisdom. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” Here we see that earthly wisdom is based on self-seeking or what will be most beneficial for the person that is trying to show worldly wisdom. As a result, no person that is without Christ can skillfully apply the Word of God to practical situations and certainly not with a gentle spirit.

In contrast, James 3:17-18 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” As we show our children by our example how to share the peace that is from above and develop a gentle attitude, we see that they will be become equipped to make peace between other Christians. The Lord will help them learn to skillfully apply the Word of God to the situations that people face in their lives. As they do this with a gentle spirit, the Lord will use their attitude to work in the hearts of those who are in conflict.

However, we go on to see the attitude that the Lord wants all Christians to develop. We read in I Corinthians 6:7-8, “Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather *let yourselves* be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and *you do* these things *to your* brethren!”

Paul said that there was a problem that the Christians were even going to law against one another. Paul said that the Corinthians were still showing the self-seeking attitude that is a part of worldly wisdom. That was why they needed to grow and mature in their spiritual lives.

Here we see why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity. That is the only way that their thinking will be transformed so that they begin to think Biblically instead of continuing to think like the world. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” As our children are being transformed by the renewing of their minds, they will be able to share with others the will of God.

Christ said in Matthew 5:38-40, “You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also.” In these verses Christ made it clear that as Christians we are not to try and get even with others. Instead we are to be willing to accept wrong. We are to be willing to let ourselves be cheated. As we model these attitudes for our children and explain that our goal is to please Christ, we give them an example to follow in their own lives. This is a clear example of the fact that the Corinthians had not matured in their spiritual lives so that they were willing to apply the instructions of Christ in their daily lives.

Instead the Corinthian Christians were doing wrong to each other and cheating each other. As a result, the people that lived in the city of Corinth could not see any difference between their own actions and the actions of the Corinthian Christians. The same will be true if we do not help our children grow to spiritual maturity so that they learn to think Biblically. In contrast, if we show our children how to think and act Biblically, their lives will demonstrate Matthew 5:16. That verse says, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” We want to help our children learn that their lives will make a real difference and cause people to glorify God because their lives are filled with good works that glorify God.

Many Christians today are like the Corinthian Christians and have not grown to spiritual maturity. Such Christians are still controlled by worldly thinking and have many conflicts with others including other Christians. That is why we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to apply Biblical principles in their own lives so that their lives will be an example to others and the Lord will give them many opportunities to be peacemakers. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to have an effective ministry for the Lord as peacemakers.

13.

Learning to Function as the Temple of God

In our last topic we saw that we are to help our children learn to become peacemakers who can help other Christians resolve conflicts between themselves and other Christians. Today we are going to see how we help our children learn what it means when the Lord says that their bodies are the temple of God. We will see that a clear understanding of what this means will help our children to have a powerful impact as the Lord both works in their lives and through their lives.

In I Corinthians 6:9-11 we read, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul had been talking in the previous verses about various forms of unrighteousness. As a result, he now reminded the Corinthians of the fact that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. The word that is translated “unrighteous” speaks of all those who are still facing eternal judgment for sin. II Peter 2:9 says, “Then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment.” Here we see that all that are unjust are still facing the day of judgment.

However, I Peter 3:18 also says, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit.” Christ was the one who just because He was without sin. We were all unjust because we were all guilty of sin. As a result, Christ suffered and paid the penalty for our sins so that He might bring us to God. This means that we now stand in the righteousness of Christ because we are in Christ the moment that we repent and place our faith in Christ. As God looks at all believers, He sees the righteousness of Christ which blotted out all of our sins so the Father sees us as righteous. However, those who are still unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

These verses go on to point out that those who are continuing to practice the sins that are mentioned in these verses will not inherit the kingdom of God. Here we are reminded that once we come to Christ that Christ gives us new desires and we have the desire to please Christ and want to avoid the sins of the past. We are given the strength to walk to please the Lord as we learn to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” Those who continue to practice the works of the flesh as a pattern of life show that they have not yet placed their faith in Christ.

Some people who place their trust in Christ practiced many or all of these sins before they came to Christ because verse eleven says that such were some of you. However, at the moment any person places their faith in Christ, this verse says that three things happen. First, our sins are washed away. Second, we are sanctified. To be sanctified means to be set apart from sin and dedicated to God. Third, we are justified. The word “justified” means that we are declared righteous and have been set free from the penalty of sin through Christ and the Holy Spirit is now transforming our lives.

Paul goes on to point out in I Corinthians 6:12, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Since Galatians 3:24-25 point out the fact that the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ but once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law, many Corinthians thought that they were free to continue to sin as they chose. However, 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.” Here we see that we are not to use our freedom to continue to live in sin. Instead we are to use our freedom to serve one another in love. We want to help our children realize that all things are not helpful to them in their lives. In fact when Christians continue to practice certain sins, they can be brought under the power of those sins. Romans 6:16 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?” We want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to live a righteous life.

Paul goes on in I Corinthians 6:13-17 to say, “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body *is* not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make *them* members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For "the two," He says, "shall become one flesh." But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” Many people today are like the Corinthians and do not relate that what they do with their body affects their relationship with the Lord. They feel that just as they want food for their body that it is all right to practice sexual immorality as well.

As a result, these verses go on to make it very clear that the Lord made our bodies for Himself. Just as God raised the body of Christ from the dead, God will also raise our bodies from the dead. I 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 the Lord is going to raise our bodies by His power when He comes back for us.

That is why it is important to understand that our bodies are a part of Christ and belong to Him. We are not to use our bodies that belong to Christ for immorality. When God brought Eve to Adam, He said in Genesis 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” When a person has a sexual relationship with someone outside of marriage, God says that the person has joined their body to the other person. Any person that is a Christian has been joined to the Lord is one spirit with Christ. As a result, both our body and our spirit are joined to the Lord and we are to use both our body and spirit to glorify God. Paul points out that Christians who commit sexual sin profane Christ because we are one with Him.

I Corinthians 6:18 says, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body,

but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” Here we see that we are to flee every form of sexual immorality. II Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here we see that the way to deal with sexual temptation is to flee from it. The word that is translated “flee” means to run and escape and to get safely out of danger. Joseph illustrated exactly what this means in Genesis 39:12 where we read, “That she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.” We are reminded that those who commit sexual immorality are actually sinning against their own body. That is why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children understand the consequences of sexual sin.

In contrast, I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here we are reminded that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit because He lives within us. In the Old Testament, the temple was built in Jerusalem. One day each year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies. First he would place blood on the mercy seat as a covering for his own sin. Then he would go out and get more blood and place it on the mercy seat as a covering for the sins of the people. That was the only time in the year that the high priest was even allowed to go into the Holy of Holies to remind the people that God is a holy God.

Now in the New Testament we do not have a building where we have to go to meet God once a year. Instead God chose to put His Holy Spirit in us so that we can be continually in fellowship with God. Our human bodies have become the temple of the Holy Spirit. We want to help our children understand that their bodies are also the temple of the Holy Spirit because God wants to have continual fellowship with them. To sin against our body is to sin against the temple of the Holy Spirit. II Corinthians 6:16 says, “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” God lives in our lives and walks with us.

In order for God to live in our lives, God had to pay a terrible price. That price was not the blood of animals like in the Old Testament. I Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” The Father had to send His own Son to pay the penalty for our sins with His blood so that His Spirit could live within us. That is why we want to show our children by our own example how to glorify God both with their body and with their spirit because God purchased both with the blood of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to function as the temple of God.

14.

Learning to Build a Godly Marriage

In our last topic we saw that we are to help our children understand that their body is the temple of God so that they will use both their body and their spirit to glorify God. We were given a special warning about the fact that any sexual sin is a sin against the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells. As a result, we are to conduct our life in such a way that we glorify God. Marriage was the first institution that God established when He brought Eve to Adam in Genesis 2. In order to help our children learn to glorify God in their body we want to help them learn how to build a godly marriage so that they are able to glorify God both with their body and with their human spirit.

The Corinthian Christians had questions arise and so had written to Paul to ask him for instructions. The answers that Paul gave to these questions help us to know how to answer our physical and spiritual children when they ask similar questions. One of the areas where the Corinthians had questions was whether singleness was superior to marriage since Paul was single. I Corinthians 7:1-2 says, “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: *It is* good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Paul here says that it is good for a man to be single and not have sexual relationships. However, he also says that it is also good for a man to have a wife or for a woman to have a husband in order to avoid sexual immorality by having sexual relationships with the husband or wife that the Lord has given the person.

Paul is going to give instructions to those who do not have strong sexual desires and want to choose singleness later in the chapter. However, he begins by talking about marriage first. We see that one purpose of marriage is to avoid sexual immorality. As a result, Paul began by talking about the responsibility of the husband to his wife and the wife to her husband. I Corinthians 7:3-4 says, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*.”

The word that is translated “affection” means good will or kindness. The only other place where this word is used in the New Testament is in Ephesians 6:5-7 where we read, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” In these verses we see that bondservants were to work to please the Lord by doing the will of God from the heart. They were to do the will of God with good will as to the Lord. In the same way husbands and wives are to do good will to one another as to the Lord because they are carrying out the will of God.

In order to do good will to the Lord from the heart, God says that in the marriage relationship

that neither partner has authority over their own body. Instead in a godly marriage each partner is to recognize that their partner has authority over their body. The word that is translated “authority or power” is used four times in the New Testament, two in this verse. The word is also used in I Corinthians 6:12 where we read, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” In this verse we see that Paul said that he would not be brought under the power of any. Paul said it was lawful for him to do anything but he did not want to let any sin get authority or power over him. Here we see that in a Christian marriage that each partner is actually giving the authority over their body to their partner.

We see why God says that each partner is to give this authority to their partner in verse five. I Corinthians 7:5 says, “Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.” Here we see the purpose of giving authority over our body to our partner is to avoid temptation by Satan. The word that is translated “deprive” means to rob or defraud or to keep something back by fraud. Here we see that husbands and wives are to give the authority over their bodies to their partner so that their partner will not be tempted to sexual sin because they fail to meet the sexual needs of their partner.

The one exception to this instruction would be if both partners agree together to avoid sexual relationships with each other for a short period of time so that they can both devote their time to fasting and prayer. However, once the period of fasting and prayer comes to an end they are to resume sexual relationships so that Satan will not be able to tempt either their partner or themselves because of their lack of self-control. Here we see that sexual relationships in marriage are to be regular in order to meet the needs of the partner because even a time set aside for fasting and prayer will not last too long.

Next Paul answers the question that was asked about remaining single and never getting married. In I Corinthians 6:6-7 Paul said, “But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment. For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that.” Paul said that the instructions that he had given about marriage were to make the Corinthians aware of the desire of God if they were married. He said that he was not giving them a commandment to marry. Paul realized that there were some benefits to singleness and there were some benefits to marriage. However, God gives some the gift of singleness and others the gift of marriage. We are to realize that either is a gift from God.

However, Paul said that he did wish that all men were even as he. Here we see that Paul realized that there were some benefits of singleness for those who were serving the Lord. In fact he was thankful that God had given him the gift of singleness. Paul often had to leave a city on short notice in order to avoid getting killed. Acts 17:13-14 says, “But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds. Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.” Here we see that Paul had to get out of the city quickly so that he would not be killed. He realized that if he had a wife and family that it would not have been as easy to leave the city immediately in such situations if he would have had a wife and family traveling with him.

In I Corinthians 9:5-6 Paul wrote, “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working?” Here we see that Paul said that the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord all took along a believing wife with them as they traveled. He asked if he and Barnabas were the only two who did not have the right to be married or be supported by others. Here we see that Paul understood that the gift of marriage was important for the other apostles. The reason that he realized God gave him the gift of singleness was due to the fact that he always stirred up opposition from the unbelieving Jews because he was taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. He had been escaping from unbelieving Jews from the time that he had been let down over the wall at Damascus to escape the Jews that wanted to kill him. At the same time Paul realized that singleness was not for everyone.

As we go on to I Corinthians 7:8-9 we read, “But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” Here we see that Paul said that it was fine for the unmarried and for the widows to remain unmarried just as it was fine for him to remain unmarried. The word that is translated “unmarried” is used four times in the New Testament and they are all in this chapter. The other three uses are in verses 11, 32 and 34. Verse 11 says, “But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.” Here we see that the word unmarried is speaking of a woman whose husband is separated or divorced from her.

In I Corinthians 7:25 we read, “Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy *has made* trustworthy.” Here we see that the word “virgins” is used to refer to those who have never married. Then I Corinthians 11:39 says, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.” Here we see that this verse speaks about those who are single due to the death of a partner.

Regardless of the reason why a person is unmarried, we see that verses 32 and 34 say almost the same thing to either a woman or a man as verse 32 and 33 talks about a man and verse 34 a woman. Verse 32-33 says, “But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please *his* wife.” Here we see that a person that is unmarried can focus their whole attention on their service for the Lord. However, verse 9 says that it is all right for unmarried persons to marry. That verse says, “But if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn *with passion*.” Here Paul says it is better for a person to marry than to have strong passions and not be able to exercise self-control. We want to help our children understand that God can use people whether they are single or married. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to answer questions about marriage.

15.

Learning to Minister to an Unbelieving Partner

In our last topic we saw that we are to conduct our lives in such a way that our lives will bring glory to God. This is true whether we are married or single. As a result, we saw that the Corinthians asked Paul a number of questions about marriage. In the answers that Paul gave to those questions, he gave us guidance to help our children learn how to help people with their questions about marriage. Today we are going to see that Paul gave guidance for another situation that is often faced in marriage. That is the situation where a Christian is married to an unbelieving partner. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to understand the answer of Paul to this question so that they can help others.

In I Corinthians 7:10-11 we read, “Now to the married I command, *yet* not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from *her* husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to *her* husband. And a husband is not to divorce *his* wife.” In these verses we see that one of the questions of the Corinthians was about separation or divorce. Here we see that that in a Christian marriage that it is God’s plan for a wife not to depart from her husband and for a husband not to divorce his wife. Here we see that it is not the plan of the Lord for a Christian couple to separate from one another. However, we also see that if they do separate from one another that they are to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to one another. This is a reminder that the Lord can restore a marriage even when a couple is separated from one another.

The Pharisees had asked a similar question of Christ in an effort to justify their own divorces. In Matthew 19:3 we see how the Pharisees had questioned Christ. That verse says, “The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” Christ quoted Genesis 2 and pointed out that God makes two people one. Then the Pharisees said in Matthew 19:7-8, “They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” We see that as Moses wrote the law that divorce was permitted but that it was never required. We also see why the law permitted divorce. Christ said that the reason that divorce was permitted was due to the hardness of the hearts of people.

As we learn to yield our lives to the control of the Holy Spirit, the Lord causes hard hearts to become forgiving hearts. That is why I Corinthians says that if a couple is separated or divorced that they are to remain unmarried so that it will become possible for them to be reconciled to their partner. As long as neither partner has remarried, it is still possible for that couple to be reconciled. Deuteronomy 24:4 points out that the thing that really breaks a marriage is when either partner has remarried so that reconciliation is not possible. That verse says, “*Then* her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that *is* an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God is giving you *as* an inheritance.” Many couples that are separated are reconciled once they become Christians because they learn to yield to the Lord and forgive one another.

Next Paul goes on to answer the question regarding a couple where one partner is a Christian and the other partner is not a Christian. I Corinthians 7:12-14 says, “But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” It is common for one partner to become a Christian before the second partner becomes a Christian. In other cases a person that is a Christian may have been disobedient to the Lord and married a person that was not a Christian. Whatever the case, we see that these verses give words of encouragement to the believing partner.

Many times the unbelieving partner is very willing to remain with the believing partner. As a result, Paul said that the believing partner is not to leave and divorce the unbelieving partner. Instead the believing partner is to realize that his or her life can have a powerful impact on the unbelieving partner. I Corinthians 7:16 says, “For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save *your* husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save *your* wife?” In I Peter 3:1-2 Peter tells the wives who have unbelieving husbands, “Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear.” Here we see that the changed actions of the Christian partner will often draw the non-Christian partner to the Lord.

Peter tells us why the changed behavior of the Christian partner is so powerful. I Peter 3:3-4 says, “Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel--rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.” Peter said that the outward appearance is not the thing that will win the partner to the Lord. Instead Peter says that the inner attitudes of a godly woman will draw the husband to the Lord. That is why the God says that a gentle and quiet spirit is very precious in the sight of God. God says that there is great beauty in a gentle and quiet spirit. The outward changed behavior demonstrates that gentle and quiet spirit to the partner and uses that spirit to draw the partner to the Lord. In the same way the changed life of a Christian husband will draw the wife to the Lord if the wife is not a Christian.

Paul also said that the believing partner sanctifies the unbelieving partner. The word “sanctify” means to set apart to God. The very fact that one partner is a Christian causes the other partner to receive certain blessings from the Lord. The Lord promises to hear and answer the prayers of Christians that are according to His will. II Peter 3:9 says, “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.” As the Christian prays daily for the salvation of the partner, I John 5:14-15 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” The Christian partner will often see the unbelieving partner become a Christian as the Christian develops changed behavior. This will happen due to a gentle and quiet spirit and daily prayer for the salvation of the partner.

In addition, if the parent that is a Christian is obedient to the Lord, the Lord will use the godly life of the Christian partner to draw the children to the Lord because they are also sanctified by the believing parent. This is illustrated by the example of Timothy. Acts 16:3 points out that the father of Timothy was a Greek and not a follower of the Lord. That verse says, "Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek." However, in II Timothy 1:5 we read, "When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Then II Timothy 3:15 adds, "And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." The mother and grandmother of Timothy taught him the Word of God and he became a faithful follower of the Lord.

In I Corinthians 7:15 we see that the unbelieving partner may in some cases make the choice to depart and leave the Christian. That verse says, "But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such *cases*. But God has called us to peace." There are some individuals who become so angry when a partner becomes a Christian that they choose to leave and divorce the partner. God says that in such cases that the Christian is not under bondage. The Christian should not try to force the unbelieving partner to remain against their will.

In such cases God reminds us that He has called us to peace. Instead of becoming angry or fearful, Philippians 4:5-7 tells us how to have peace in any situation. Those verses say, "Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Here we see that when an unbelieving partner would choose to leave that the Lord wants to give the Christian His peace. God says that His peace will guard both our hearts and our minds through Christ Jesus.

As we see in these verses, God will use the godly character of the believing partner to win the unbelieving partner to the Lord in many cases. In a few cases the unbelieving partner will be so angry against God that the unbelieving partner may choose to leave. However, in either case the Lord wants to give the believing partner His peace. It will bring peace and joy to the heart of the believing partner if their changed behavior draws the unbelieving partner to the Lord. In those cases where the unbelieving partner chooses to leave the marriage, God says that He is able to give His peace to the believing partner. We want to help both our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain these things to the believing partner. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to understand how to help Christians who have an unbelieving partner.

16.

Learning to Accept Our Background

In our last topic we saw that the Lord used Paul to give instructions about the way that a person who is a Christian is to minister to a partner that is not a Christian. The Corinthians had also asked Paul other questions about marriage. As a result, we will see in our topic today that Paul continues to answer questions about marriage and other related topics. Just as a person may become a Christian after marriage and have no background of Christianity, there are also many other backgrounds that a person may have at the time that a person becomes a Christian. For that reason Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the importance of accepting the background that we had at the time that we became a Christian. We also want to help our children learn how to help others accept the background that they had before they placed their faith in Christ.

In I Corinthians 7:17 we read, “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches.” The word that is translated “distributed” means to divide or to distribute. It points out the fact that God allows each of us to have a different background. God takes the things that have been a part of our background and uses them to help equip us for the unique ministry that the Lord has for each one of us. At the time we respond to the call of the Lord to salvation, certain things are true about our lives. In the previous verses we saw that a person might be married and their partner is not a Christian at the time the person becomes a Christian. If that is true in the life of a person, that person begins their life in Christ with a partner that is not a Christian.

Paul pointed out the fact that each person is to accept the circumstances that are a part of their life at the time that they become a Christian. The word that is translated “walk” means to make use of the opportunities or to conduct one’s life based on the circumstances that they have in their life. At the moment we placed our trust in Christ we were all given a new circumstance. Romans 8:4 says, “That the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” The new circumstance is that we are now able to walk according to the Spirit instead of walking according to the flesh. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” Here we see that we are to walk in the good works which God has prepared for us by the circumstances that we have had in our lives.

In I Corinthians 7:18-19 we read, “Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God *is what matters.*” Here we see two possible backgrounds that a person might have. Abraham had been commanded to circumcise all of his descendents. As a result, all of the Jews were circumcised. This meant that circumcision was a part of the background of each Jew. In contrast the Gentiles were usually not circumcised. Paul said that those who were circumcised were not to try to become uncircumcised and those who were uncircumcised were not to be circumcised.

Instead Paul said that people were to realize that God had given them the background that they received to prepare them for a particular kind of ministry. Although both Peter and Paul were Jews they had grown up in very different circumstances. Peter had grown up among the Jews in Galilee. Paul had grown up among the Gentiles in Tarsus. God used the background of each to prepare each of them for the ministry to which the Lord called them. Galatians 2:7-8 says, "But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter (for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles)." Here we see that God had allowed Peter and Paul to grow up in very different situations to prepare them for the ministry that the Lord had for each of them.

Paul said that whether a person was circumcised or uncircumcised was not even the key thing. Paul said that the thing that really matters is that we are obedient to the commandments that God has given us. Christ summarized those commandments in Matthew 22:37-40 and John 13:34-35. Matthew 22:37-40 says, "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." John 13:34-35 says, "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." If we will love God with our whole heart, love our neighbor as we love ourselves and love one another as Christ has loved us, those commandments summarize the entire Bible.

Paul went on to point out a different type of circumstances in I Corinthians 7:20-22. Those verses say, "Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called *while* a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use *it*. For he who is called in the Lord *while* a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called *while* free is Christ's slave." In the time of the New Testament about one half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves. In fact slavery in that time meant that the master had the power of life and death over the slave. Many of the early Christians were slaves at the time they placed their faith in Christ. Those who became Christians that were slaves were not to be concerned about the fact that they were slaves. God could still give them a ministry as slaves.

If their master became a Christian and offered them freedom from their slavery, then they were to use that freedom to serve the Lord. Onesimus had been a slave of his master Philemon. Onesimus had stolen money from his master and had run away to Rome. There he met Paul and became a Christian. Paul wrote to Philemon and said in Philemon 1:15-17, "For perhaps he departed for a while for this *purpose*, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave--a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord. If then you count me as a partner, receive him as *you would* me." Since both Onesimus and Philemon were now Christians, Paul said that they now had a new relationship to each other. They were beloved brothers in Christ. In fact Paul encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus as a full partner in ministry.

Paul said that those Christians who were slaves were actually the Lord's freedmen. 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.” Then Ephesians 6:5-7 says, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Paul pointed out that even a person that was a bondservant was to focus on doing the will of God from the heart.

In contrast, Paul said that those who had their freedom when they became Christians were actually to be Christ’s slaves. Romans 6:16-18 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.” If we are free, then we are to be the slaves of Christ and do the will of God from our hearts. We have been set free from sin so that we have the freedom to serve Christ and others in love.

We are next reminded in I Corinthians 7:23-24, “You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brethren, let each one remain with God in that *state* in which he was called.” In these verses we see that we have been bought with a price. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” Here we see why we want to be able to help our children understand how to help others learn to accept the background that they have experienced.

The price that Christ paid to purchase our freedom from the bondage to sin was the blood of Christ. I Peter 1:18-19 says, “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like* silver or gold, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” Since Christ paid such an expensive price to set us free from our sin, we do not want to become slaves again to the sins of people. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” That is why we are to remain in the state of spiritual freedom to which God has called us and not become entangled again in a yoke of bondage to sin. It is a great privilege to help both our physical and our spiritual children fully understand that when they placed their faith in Christ that they were set free from the bondage of sin. We want to help them learn to live in that freedom. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to accept and minister from the background the Lord gave them.

17.

Learning to Minister to the Unmarried

In our last topic we saw that we are to help our children learn to accept the background that they have experienced and learn to use the things from that background to help them in their ministry. In our topic today we are going to see that Paul also answered questions about those who are unmarried to help them learn to minister effectively from their singleness. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Paul pointed out in the beginning of I Corinthians 7 that marriage is good and singleness is also good. In I Corinthians 7:25-27 we read, “Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy *has made* trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress--that *it is* good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.” As we look at the last verses of this chapter we see that Paul explains why singleness is good.

Here we see that Paul pointed out that singleness was good because of the present distress. Paul was already experiencing persecution and he saw that persecution could easily come against the entire church. Religious persecution was coming from the Jews and false religions. Severe persecution from the Roman emperor against the church began about ten years later. Acts 17:10 tells how Paul and Silas had to flee persecution. That verse says, “Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.” A single person could flee much more easily. A person with a family would find it much more difficult to have to escape during the night. Paul said that those who were married should not seek to become single. However, for those who were still single, Paul said that the situation at that time would be easier for those who were single.

Paul gave a second reason for singleness in I Corinthians 7:28. That verse says, “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you. Paul began by making it clear that it was not a sin for a person to get married. However, Paul said that those who marry will have trouble in the flesh. The word that is translated “trouble” is usually translated tribulation or affliction. Paul used this word in Acts 20:22-23 where we read, “And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.” Paul knew that he was going to face various pressures. In the same way, marriage will add certain conflicts to a couple because they have to learn to adjust to each other and they may have come from very different backgrounds.

Paul gave a third reason for remaining single in I Corinthians 7:29-31. Those verses say, “But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use

this world as not misusing *it*. For the form of this world is passing away.” Here we see that Paul reminded the Corinthians that the time is short. As Christians, Colossians 3:2 tells us, “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” Our time here on earth is short and we are to use our time wisely for the Lord. Those who are single are able to use more of their time to focus on the things above because they do not have family responsibilities.

In fact the shortness of time on this earth and the importance of putting the Lord first will affect everything that we do on this earth. As verse 31 says, “For the form of this world is passing away.” I Corinthians 3:13-14 says this about our works on this earth, “Each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on *it* endures, he will receive a reward.” If we are single we can devote our time to those things that are eternal. If we are married, we should devote our time as a team to those things that are eternal. If we want eternal rewards, we want our works to stand when they are tested and that causes us to change our priorities while we are here on this earth. That will be true also as we go through times of sorrow or rejoicing.

In fact as a result of the shortness of time on this earth, Paul encourages us not to place our focus on the business of this earth. Many Christians, both single and married, can become so focused on the business of this world that they neglect their spiritual ministry. That is why Paul warns here of the danger of focusing on possessions. Christ said in Matthew 6:19-21, “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.” Earthly possessions can easily be misused and cause us to neglect spiritual ministry.

Paul goes on to point out a fourth benefit of singleness for ministry. I Corinthians 7:32-35 says, “But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord--how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world--how he may please *his* wife. There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world--how she may please *her* husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.” The word that is translated “care” means to be free from concern or anxiety.

The person that is not married does not have to be concerned about providing for the needs of a wife and children. As a result, such a person is able to devote his time to pleasing the Lord. In contrast, a person that is married has to be concerned about providing for the needs of his wife and children. In fact I Timothy 5:8 says, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” As a result, every husband is responsible before God to provide for the needs of his wife and children. That is a part of his witness to the world around him.

Paul goes on to point out that a wife also has certain responsibilities that a single woman does not have. As a result, the unmarried woman is able to be holy in both body and spirit. This

reminds us of the fact that an unmarried woman does not have to deal with all of the responsibilities that go along with a husband and a family. A married woman is concerned how to please her husband. As a result, a single woman is able to serve the Lord without distraction. This makes it possible for a single woman to devote her life to ministries that might be impossible for a woman with a husband and a family.

In I Corinthians 7:36-38 we go on to 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. Nevertheless he who stands steadfast in his heart, having no necessity, but has power over his own will, and has so determined in his heart that he will keep his virgin, does well. So then he who gives *her* in marriage does well, but he who does not give *her* in marriage does better.” In the city of Corinth some of the fathers had apparently dedicated their daughters to the Lord so that they could remain as virgins permanently.

However, as those daughters became mature adults, some of them wanted to get married. Here we see that the fathers of those daughters who wanted to get married are instructed to allow those daughters to marry. Paul wanted the fathers to understand that it was not a sin for them to allow their daughters to get married. They could still serve the Lord as married women. In contrast, some of the daughters had no strong desire to marry. In that case the fathers were free to allow them to remain single. A daughter who wanted to devote her life to serving the Lord without the additional responsibilities of marriage was to be allowed to devote her life to serving the Lord as a single woman. As a result, we see that both a married woman and a single woman could serve the Lord with their lives.

Finally I Corinthians 7:39-40 says, “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment--and I think I also have the Spirit of God.” Here we see that a marriage is to last until a partner dies. Both husbands and wives were to realize that if they were married that they were to serve the Lord as married partners until one of them died.

If a partner dies, a person is then free to remarry. However, there is no requirement that a person must remarry if the partner dies. In fact Paul said that many women will be happier if they choose singleness after their partner dies. That will give them the opportunity to serve the Lord without the responsibilities of a marriage and caring for a husband. As we look at this chapter on marriage, we see that marriage is good. We also see that singleness is good. When people become Christians, they need to realize that they can serve the Lord effectively whether they are married or single. We want to help our physical and spiritual children know how to help both those who are married and those who are single learn how to serve the Lord effectively. The Lord will greatly use their ministry as they are able to answer the questions of others about marriage. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to help others serve the Lord.

18.

Learning to Build Up Weak Christians

In our last several topics we have seen how to help our children learn to develop a ministry that will help both those who are married and those who choose to remain single. After Paul finished answering the questions about marriage, he turned to a completely different topic. Many of the people in Corinth had worshiped idols before they became followers of Christ. This often involved offering food sacrifices to those idols. The priests of the idol temples would then sell the food to pay the expenses of the temple. As a result, this caused the Christians in Corinth to have questions about eating food that had been offered to idols. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In I Corinthian 8:1-3 we read, “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.” Since the people had bought food for many years that had been offered to idols, some of them now had questions about whether it was right to buy such food since they had become Christians. Other Christians were more mature and knew that idols and demons had no power over the people that ate food that had been offered to idols. As a result, this was causing conflict in the church at Corinth. As a result, Paul began by first speaking to the Christians that were more mature.

Paul reminded the more mature Christians that they had knowledge and knew that idols and demons have no power over people that ate food that had been offered to idols. However, Paul warned them that knowledge without love can be very destructive. Knowledge will cause a person to become proud. Romans 14:1-3 says, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.” Paul knew that a proud Christian would despise those Christians who were weaker. As a result, Paul wanted the stronger Christians to show their love instead of their knowledge. Paul knew that love and understanding shown to the weaker Christians would help to build them up in their spiritual growth while pride would hinder their spiritual growth. That same thing is true today.

Paul reminded the more mature Christians that they do not yet know all things. In fact any Christian that thinks he has superior knowledge should understand that he does not yet have full knowledge of anything. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” The thoughts and ways of the Lord are so much higher than our thoughts and ways that none of us has any room for pride. We do not yet understand anything fully. As a result, we see that we should be known for our love for God instead of our human knowledge. When we love God, we can know that we are known by Him.

After warning the more mature Christians about the dangers of pride, Paul goes on to answer the questions of those who did not want to eat food that had been offered to idols. In I Corinthians 8:4-6 says, “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.” Paul said that their question about eating things offered to idols was an important question.

Then Paul said that an idol is nothing in the world. Here we see that an idol has no power because an idol is nothing and has no life. Psalm 135:15-18 says, “The idols of the nations *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; nor is there *any* breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; *so is* everyone who trusts in them.” Idols were often made to look like people. Their faces had eyes and mouths. However, they had no life in them. Since idols lack life they had no power to do anything.

People made many idols that were called gods by the people that made them. As a result, there are many idols that are called gods. Some of these so-called gods are in the heavens because people worship the sun, moon or stars. Other so-called gods are on earth because people had made them from metal, wood or stones. However, none of these gods have any life any them. As a result, the people who had formerly followed these idols did not have to be afraid of them.

Instead these weak Christians needed to understand that there is only one true and living God, the Father who willed the creation of all things. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In fact the very fact that we are here on this earth is the result of the will of the Father. In addition, there is only one Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the One through whom the Father created all things. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Here we see that Christ was the One who carried out the will of the Father by creating the heavens and the earth.

In addition, we also see that it is through Christ that we receive spiritual life. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is also important to help our children learn to explain to others that Christ is our source of life. Before we placed our trust in Christ we were spiritually dead because we were separated from God. At the moment that we placed our trust in Christ, He placed the Holy Spirit in our human spirit and we immediately received spiritual life. This is one of the things that we want to help our children to fully understand so that they can explain what has happened in their lives to every new Christian. Before any person places their faith in Christ they are spiritually dead because their trespasses and sins separate them from God. At the moment of salvation that death is changed to life because their sins are forgiven and they receive spiritual life and become the children of God.

Many new Christians as well as some who have been Christians for many years do not

understand the changes that happened in their lives at the moment of salvation. That is why I Corinthians 8:7-8 says, “However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.” Here we see that this lack of knowledge can have a very powerful effect on weak Christians especially those who have worshiped idols before placing their faith in Christ.

One reason why many weak Christians continue to lack understanding is explained for us in I Corinthians 10:20. That verse says, “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.” Many people who offer sacrifices do not just make those sacrifices to the idols. Instead they actually make those sacrifices to demons because of their fear of evil spirits. Before coming to Christ they used to make those sacrifices to demons because of their fear of evil spirits. Many weak Christians still have that fear of evil spirits because of things that they have seen happen in their families.

We want to help our children understand two things in order to help such individuals. First, we want them to understand the reality of demonic power. Ephesians 6:12 says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Our children need to understand the reality of demons and understand that Ephesians 6:17-18 point out that our weapons in spiritual conflict are the Word of God and prayer.

Second we want to help our children understand that all Christians, including new Christians, have already won the victory over all demonic power. I John 4:3-4 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Because every Christian has the Holy Spirit come into their human spirit at the moment of salvation, we already have victory over all demonic power. Because the Holy Spirit that came into our lives is God the Holy Spirit, we have God living within our lives and demons have no power against the Holy Spirit. This is an extremely important thing for weak Christians to understand.

Until new Christians come to a full understanding of the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given them victory over all demonic spirits, many of them will be weak and have their consciences defiled because of their fear of evil spirits. We want to help our children learn how to explain to new Christians the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given them victory over all evil spirits. Then the new Christians will understand that eating various foods will not make them either better or worse. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help weak Christians that still fear evil spirits.

19.

Avoiding Hindering the Growth of Others

In our last topic we saw that many weak Christians still have a fear of evil spirits. We saw that we want to help our children learn to explain to such individuals that the Holy Spirit living in our lives has all power and has already overcome all evil spirits. As a result, any person that has become a Christian does not have to fear demonic spirits any longer. It is important to help our children understand that fact. At the same time we are to avoid hindering the spiritual growth of others that have not yet understood that fact.

We saw in our last topic that some of the stronger Christians in Corinth understood that idols and the demons behind those idols have no power over Christians. As a result, those Christians felt free to eat meat that had been offered to idols. However, I Corinthians 8: 9 says, “But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak.” It is true that as Christians we have liberty because we have been set free. However, Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that liberty does not mean that they are now free to sin. Instead liberty sets us free to serve one another in love. Paul warned the stronger Christians in Corinth not to let their liberty cause them to become a stumbling block to those Christians who were weaker.

We want to help our children learn a very important principle for today from what Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Romans 14:13 says, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way.” We want to help our children learn to make the choice to avoid things that would be a stumbling block to weak Christians. In different parts of the world it will not be the same things that could be a stumbling block to weaker Christians. That is why we want to help our children understand the principle so that wherever they go they will not make choices that would cause a weaker Christian to stumble or fall.

Paul explained how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to make choices that will not cause a weaker Christian to stumble or fall. Romans 14:19-21 says, “Therefore let us pursue the things *which make* for peace and the things by which one may edify another. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed *are* pure, but *it is* evil for the man who eats with offense. *It is* good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor *do anything* by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak.” We want to help our children learn to pursue the things that will help other Christians to experience peace and build up other Christians. We want to help them understand that we do not want to destroy the work of God for anything that will be just to please ourselves. To avoid causing the weaker Christian to fall, we choose to avoid those things that would cause others to stumble even though they are not sin.

In I Corinthian 8:10-11 Paul wrote, “For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an

idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?" It was not wrong for the Christians in Corinth to eat food that had been offered to idols. However, Paul told the strong Christians not to think just about their own desires. Instead he encouraged them to think about the conscience of those Christians that were weak. The conscience of weak Christians causes them to be afraid to do something that they think might be sin. That is why Romans 14:23 says, "But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because *he does* not eat from faith; for whatever *is* not from faith is sin." The weak Christian that has doubts will feel condemned if he thinks he is doing something that he thinks might be sin.

We may know that certain things are not sin. However, if those same things cause the conscience of a weak Christian to feel condemned if they do those things, then by our example we are causing the weak Christian to do things that cause him to have great guilt. He may follow our example and do those things but all the time that he is doing those things his conscience is bothering him. Paul said in I Corinthians 9:19, "For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more." Paul gives us an example for our own lives and for our children. He chose to avoid those things that would either hinder a person from coming to Christ or would hinder a weak Christian from growing in Christ. In the same way we want to provide such an example by our own lives and help our children learn to provide a similar example.

The word that is translated "perish" usually means to be destroyed. That is the way the word is used in I Corinthians 10:9-10 where it talks about physical destruction. Those verses say, "Nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer." In other passages it speaks about eternal destruction. II Peter 3:9 says, "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 we see that it is not the desire of the Lord for anyone to experience eternal destruction.

However, there is also a third way that the word "perish" can be used and that is the way the word is used in this verse. Here it says that your knowledge can cause the weak brother to perish. The word weak speaks of those who are without either spiritual or physical strength. The word weak is used in Romans 14:1-2 to speak of those lacking spiritual strength. Those verses say "Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables." In this verse we see that there were Christians who were spiritually weak that were afraid to eat meat because the meat might have been offered to idols. As a result, those individuals only ate vegetables.

As a result, we see that the word "perish" can also mean to render useless. A weak Christian or a Christian that is depending on his or her own strength can begin to feel like their life is useless if they are doing things that they feel are wrong. This is illustrated in Romans 7:14-25. Romans 7:18-19 says, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice." Here we see a Christian without

strength that feels like he or she cannot do what is right. Such a person will reach the conclusion stated in Romans 7:24. That verse says, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” In their mind such a person can feel that their spiritual life is useless. Weak Christians that are doing things that they think might be sin will often feel that their lives are useless.

That is why I Corinthians 8:12-13 goes on to say, “But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”

Here we see that even something that is not sin in itself can become sin if by doing that thing we cause a weaker brother or sister to sin. The reason why that thing becomes a sin is due to the fact that we are not showing Christian love to the weaker brother. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We have been given the liberty to serve the weaker Christian. When we cause that weaker Christian to stumble we are not acting in love because we are living to please ourselves.

Here we see that our actions wound their weak conscience. The word that is translated “wound” is normally translated smite or beat. It is used in Matthew, Mark and Luke to talk about the way that men hit Christ on the head as they prepared to put him to death. Matthew 27:30 says, “Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head.” Just as the people who condemned Christ hit him on the head, this verse says that we strike the conscience of a weak brother when we please ourselves even though we know that our Christian brother is struggling in his mind about whether doing what we are doing is right or not for him to do. Since our weaker brother is a part of the body of Christ, we see that we are actually sinning against Christ.

Paul gave us an example to share with our physical and spiritual children when he said in verse 13, “Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.” Paul said that he chose not to do anything that would cause a weaker brother to stumble. In I Corinthians 9:20 Paul says, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law.” Paul knew that he was no longer under the law but he chose to obey the law because of his love for the Jews. This is illustrated in Acts 21:24 where the leaders of the church at Jerusalem encouraged Paul, “Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” Here we see that Paul walked orderly and kept the Jewish law so that he would not offend the Jewish Christians.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Paul in order to avoid hindering the growth of other Christians. It may mean that they choose to avoid doing certain things that are not sin in order to encourage weaker Christians. However, they will experience the joy of the Lord as they see the weak Christians grow. May the Lord richly bless you as you show you children how to help weaker Christians in their spiritual growth.

Learning to Minister Through Sharing

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to avoid hindering the spiritual growth of others. We saw that true Christian love will lead us to avoid doing something that would cause a weaker brother to stumble even though that thing may not be sin. In our topic today we are going to see that Paul gives us an example of the way to help our children learn to minister to others. Since the word “minister” means to serve, we see that we want to help our children learn how to serve others in their spiritual growth. That will be the focus of our topic today.

We have seen that many of the Corinthian Christians were spiritually weak. As a result, some of them even questioned whether Paul was an apostle. I Corinthians 9:1-2 says, “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.” Here we see that Paul asks the people in Corinth four questions to make them think about what they were saying. This illustrates a very important principle for us. Many Christians that are still driven by fear are quick to judge others. Here we see that one of the things that we can do to make them think about what they are saying is to ask them questions. Such questions will often cause people to think about what they are saying when they judge. Three of these questions are answered in this chapter.

The question that is not answered in this chapter is, Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? However, this question is answered in other parts of the New Testament. In Acts 9:1-7 we see how the Lord spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus. Verse 7 says, “And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.” The men with Paul heard the voice but did not see the speaker. This may indicate that Paul did see the speaker and that speaker was Jesus according to verse 5. Then 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 see that Paul spent three years in Arabia learning how to share the Gospel with the Gentiles. Whether Paul saw the Lord both on the road to Damascus and also in Arabia we do not know but we do know that he says here that he saw the Lord.

The fourth question that Paul asked the Corinthian Christians is answered in verse two. Paul asked them, Are you not my work in the Lord? Paul said that even if he was not an apostle to others that he was an apostle to the Corinthians. The fact that the Lord had transformed their lives was the seal of his apostleship. That was due to the fact that the Lord had called Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Romans 1:5 says, “Through Him we have received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith among all nations for His name.” Paul told the Romans that he had received this apostleship through Christ and that the Lord had called him by grace to take the Gospel to all nations.

Paul then went on to explain that he was free. I Corinthians 9:3-7 says, “My defense to those who examine me is this: Do we have no right to eat and drink? Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as *do* also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? Or *is it* only Barnabas and I *who* have no right to refrain from working? Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?” Paul understood that Christian freedom gave him the opportunity to serve the Lord in several ways that were different from the other apostles. Paul was free to eat and drink the foods that he chose but said in chapter eight that he was free not to eat if it would cause a weaker brother to stumble.

Paul said that he was free to marry but as he had explained in chapter 7 he was also free to be single so that he could take the Gospel to the Gentiles. In contrast Peter took a wife with him as he traveled. In Mark 1:30 we see that Peter had a wife. That verse says, “But Simon's wife's mother lay sick with a fever, and they told Him about her at once.” Paul said that he and Barnabas were free to let the Lord provide what they needed to serve the Lord but when they were at Corinth they were also free to work to supply their own needs. Acts 18:3 says, “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” Here we see that Paul had used his freedom in Christ to supply his own financial needs by making tents.

Paul pointed out that he was free to be supported in his ministry every though he had not used that freedom when he was in Corinth. Again Paul showed this freedom to be supported in his ministry by several questions. Those who go to war are supported by their government. Those who plant a vineyard eat the fruit of the vineyard. Those who feed a flock drink the milk of the flock. Paul told the Galatians in Galatians 6:6, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” Here we see that it is fine for those who are taught the Word of God to share with those who teach them.

In fact the Philippians shared with Paul more than once to help him in his ministry. Philippians 4:14-17 says, “Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.” Paul pointed out that the Philippians had used their freedom to send support to Paul even though they were a very poor church. Paul had great freedom but he did not use that freedom for his own benefit but instead chose to make tents while he was in Corinth.

Paul also pointed out that in the Old Testament God had given instructions about the way to supply the needs of those who worked. First he used the illustration of how God supplied the needs of the animals that worked. I Corinthians 9:8-9 says, “Do I say these things as a *mere* man? Or does not the law say the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it oxen God is concerned about?” In the law God had said that they could not put a muzzle on an ox when the ox was working to tread out the grain. This made it possible for the ox to eat some of the grain as he was treading out the

grain. Here we see that God even included in the law instructions that made it possible for an ox to eat the grain as he served his master. Then Paul asked another question. Paul asked if God gave those instructions in the law just for the sake of the ox.

Paul answers this question in I Corinthians 9:10-11 where we read, “Or does He say *it* altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, *this* is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown spiritual things for you, *is it* a great thing if we reap your material things?” Here Paul said that God gave the instructions about the ox as an example for us today. The ox that was doing the work of his master was to be allowed to eat by his master as he worked. This meant that the ox could have hope as he worked because he knew that the master was providing him with food as he worked. When the ox plowed he could plow in hope. When the ox threshed by treading out the grain, he could eat some of the grain that he was threshing. Paul said that this was actually instructions for our sakes. Then Paul went on to explain what he meant.

Paul and Barnabas had come to Corinth and shared the Word of God with the people in Corinth. Instead of planting a field, they were planting spiritual seeds as they shared the Word of God. Psalm 126:5-6 says, “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him*.” Paul would have been very familiar with these verses from Psalm 126. Paul had been sowing the Word of God as he shared the Gospel with the people in Corinth. Paul also shed many tears for the people in the various cities where he preached the Gospel. However, he was looking forward to the day when he would stand before the Lord with rejoicing because of the people that had become Christians as he had shared the Gospel with them. This is what he meant when he said that he and Barnabas had sown spiritual things.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children also understand that we have been given great freedom to share the Gospel with those who have not placed their trust in Christ. Just like Paul we want to help them understand that they can be free to share the Gospel whether or not they are paid to serve the Lord. We want them to understand the great joy that they will have as they stand before the Lord with the people that they have led to Christ. That in itself is such a great privilege that we can thank the Lord for the freedom that we have to share the Gospel with those who do not know Christ.

Paul did ask another question. He asked the Corinthians if it would be right for him to share their material things for his ministry. He answered this question in verse 15 when he said, “But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.” Paul had the freedom to be paid for sharing the Gospel but he had not expected the Corinthians to pay him. We want to help our children realize that they are free to follow the example of Paul and serve the Lord both by serving and sharing. Many the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to minister.

Learning to be an Example to Others

In our last topic we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children grow to understand the great privilege that it is to have the opportunity to share the Word of God with others. We also saw that it is a great privilege to share with those who share the Gospel with others. Our topic today will build on that topic as we see that we want to show our children how to be an example to others.

When we saw in our last topic that we are to share with those who share the Gospel, we also saw that Paul had not done that when he was in the city of Corinth. Instead he had worked to support himself by making tents. However, there were other people that did receive support from the Corinthians. I Corinthians 9:12 says, “If others are partakers of *this* right over you, *are* we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ.” Here Paul points out the fact that other teachers had exercised their right to receive support from the Christians at Corinth. Some of these may have been true teachers of the Gospel and it is even possible that some false teachers had received support from the Corinthian Christians.

However, Paul made it clear that he and those who traveled with him had not exercised this right by asking the people who became Christians in Corinth to support them. Then Paul explained why he and those with him had not asked the Christians to support them. Paul said that he and those with him had chosen to work and not ask for support so that they would not hinder the Gospel of Christ. Paul warned Timothy that there would be false teachers who have getting money as their goal for teaching. I Timothy 6:3-5 says, “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a *means of gain*. From such withdraw yourself.” Paul did not want the Corinthians to think that he was just preaching the Gospel to them as a way of making money so he did not even ask for support.

That was the reason why Paul chose to make tents when he was at Corinth. Paul understood the principle of contentment. Paul went on to tell Timothy in I Timothy 6:6-8, “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.” Paul wanted his life to be an example to the Corinthians of the meaning of contentment. He spent enough time making tents to provide for the food and clothing that he needed. He showed the Corinthians by his example that he was content and thankful to God because he had the basics of food and clothing.

Paul went on to say in I Corinthians 9:13-14, “Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat *of the things* of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of *the*

offerings of the altar? Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.” Paul used an illustration from the Old Testament to show that God had provided for the priests who served the Lord in the Old Testament. The priests were allowed to eat the holy things of the temple. Those who offered the sacrifices on the altar were allowed to eat part of the sacrifice to provide them with their food.

In the same way Christ had told the twelve when He sent them to share the Gospel in Luke 9:3-4, “And He said to them, “Take nothing for the journey, neither staffs nor bag nor bread nor money; and do not have two tunics apiece. 4Whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.” In that case Christ wanted to show the disciples that he would supply their needs as they ministered and so he told them to take nothing but that the people to whom they ministered would supply their needs. Paul knew that Christ had given the disciples those instructions.

Paul had chosen not to receive anything from the Corinthians. I Corinthians 9:15 says, “But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it *would be* better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void.” Paul knew that the Lord would allow him to ask those that he led to Christ to help supply him with food and clothing. However, he chose not to ask the Corinthians for anything because he knew that they could misunderstand his purpose. Here we see an important lesson for our own lives. There are certainly times when new Christians will misunderstand our purpose if we ask them for financial help. We want our lives to be an example to them and not a hindrance to them.

Paul later explained the principles that had guided his ministry when he talked to the elders of the church at Ephesus. Acts 20:33-35 says, “I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” Here we see that Paul had also worked in Ephesus to supply his own needs and the needs of the men that were with him. In fact Paul had even given the Ephesians an example by using some of the money that he earned to support the weak. He had shown the elders at Ephesus by his example that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

Paul also went on to tell the Corinthians why he preached the Gospel. I Corinthians 9:16 says, “For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” Paul said that the reason that he preached the Gospel was because necessity was laid on him. The word that is translated “necessity” means something that is placed on a person by circumstances or by the commandment of others. Paul felt the necessity to preach the Gospel for several reasons. First the Lord had called him to preach the Gospel. 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 knew that he had been called to preach the Gospel by Christ because of the circumstances of his salvation.

In addition, Paul knew that every Christian is commanded to preach the Gospel. Mark 16:15 says, "And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." Paul also knew that we will all give an account to the Lord for what we have done. He later told the Corinthians in II Corinthians 5:10-11, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." Paul wanted to give an account to the Lord for what he had done with joy. For these same reasons we want to help our children learn to be an example to others by their desire to share the Gospel.

Paul went on to say in I Corinthians 9:17-18, "For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel." Here we see some key parts of the example of Paul. Paul said that if he willingly preached the Gospel that he could look forward to a reward. Years later as Paul came to the end of his life, he said in II Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing." Paul did provide a faithful example right to the end of his life. As he neared death he looked forward to the fact that he would receive the crown of righteousness.

Paul also said that a part of his reward was to preach the Gospel without expecting anything from the people to whom he preached. He considered it a privilege to be able to share the Gospel without expecting anything from those to whom he preached. In fact Paul encouraged Timothy to tell others to focus on eternal rewards instead of material rewards. Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 6:17-19, "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. *Let them* do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Instead of looking for opportunities to receive from others, Paul encouraged Timothy to encourage others to be rich in good works and look for opportunities to share with others.

Paul encouraged Timothy to teach others to trust in the living God instead of uncertain riches. He encouraged Timothy to teach them to be rich in good works and focus on eternal rewards. In the same way we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become an example by their lives so that others will be drawn to Christ. As we show our children by our example that these are our priorities, they will be encouraged to trust Christ to use their example to help others. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to become an example to others.

Learning to Minister People Where They Are

In our last topic we saw that Paul had chosen to do what he did in his ministry at Corinth to be an example to the new Christians. In the same way we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to be an example to others so that others will learn to follow the Lord from their example. As we learn to be an example to people, we have the opportunity to minister to people in many different situations. In our topic today we are going to see that Paul gives all of us an example of the importance of learning to minister to people by learning to understand the background of each person so that we can effectively minister to people where they are at in their lives.

We have seen that Paul was free from obligation to anyone because he never asked for financial support. However, we see that Paul used this freedom to serve others in love. I Corinthians 9:19 says, “For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more.” Although Paul was free from obligation to any person because he had not asked for financial support, Paul chose to make himself a servant to all. The word that is translated “made myself a servant” is the word that speaks of a person that has become a slave to someone else. It comes from the word for bondservant which spoke of a person that was a slave.

Paul often referred to himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ. Romans 1:1 is one example when it says, “Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God.” Paul had chosen to be a bondservant of Jesus Christ. Here we see that Paul also says that he had chosen to be a bondservant to all people. Then he goes on to give the reason why he had made this choice within himself. Paul had made the choice to make himself a bondservant to all so that he could win more people to Christ. Here we see an example for our own lives. If we choose to become a bondservant to all so that we can win more people to Christ we will provide an example for our physical and spiritual children to follow.

Paul goes on to explain what it meant to be a bondservant to all by mentioning several different groups. I Corinthians 9:20-23 says, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.” For Paul to become a bondservant meant that he learned what he had to do and say to effectively communicate the Gospel to each particular group of people.

First, we see that Paul became a Jew so that he would have the opportunity to win Jews to Christ. The Jews tried to follow the Old Testament law. As a result, Paul was willing to live according to the law for the sake of reaching the Jews for Christ even though he recognized that he was no longer under the law. Acts 21:23-24 says, “Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses

so that they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.” In the last part of this verse we see that Paul walked in an orderly fashion and was obedient to the law. In the first part of the verse he was asked to take a Jewish vow. Verse 26 shows that Paul honored this request when it says, “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.” Paul was willing to take a Jewish vow to reach other Jews for Christ.

Second, we see that Paul did whatever was necessary to reach the Gentiles that did not have the Jewish law. We read in Acts 17:22-23, “Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.” Paul took time to observe the customs of the people of Athens so that he could communicate effectively with them. Because he took that time, he was able to have a starting point to begin his message at creation and end it with the death and resurrection of Christ.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he reminded them that he had taught them that Christ had set them free and as Gentiles they were not under the Jewish law. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” At the same time he taught them how to use that liberty to serve one another. 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.” Paul never taught the Gentiles that they had to obey the Jewish law.

Third, Paul also became weak so that he could gain the weak. The word “weak” speaks of those who are sick, feeble or without strength. In II Corinthians 10:10 we read, “For *his* letters,” they say, “*are* weighty and powerful, but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible.” Then in II Corinthians chapter eleven Paul told some of the physical problems that he experienced in order to bring the Gospel to others. Paul also reminded the Corinthians that he was willing to become all things to all men so that he could share the Gospel with more people with the goal that some would be saved from their sin. He went to people where they were, worked to understand their point of view and became like them instead of expecting them to come to him. He did this for the sake of the Gospel. In the same way we want to show our children by our example that we are willing to make whatever sacrifices of our own desires that are necessary in order to reach others for Christ.

Paul also encouraged the Corinthians to follow his example and be willing to make whatever sacrifices they needed to make in order to share the Gospel with others. I Corinthians 9:24-25 says, “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain *it*. And everyone who competes *for the prize* is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a perishable crown, but we *for* an imperishable *crown*.” The Greeks had two great sporting events, one was the Olympic Games and the other was the Isthmian Games. The Isthmian games were held in the city of Corinth so the Corinthians fully understood people running in races.

Paul said that in a physical race only one person can win the prize. However, to win the prize the person must compete according to the rules of the race. In addition, the runners also spent much time training before they participated in the race. They disciplined their bodies in an effort to win the race and receive the prize. In that day the prize was not a gold metal. Instead the prize was a wreath made of leaves that quickly faded. However, the people would train for many months to win that wreath that would only last for a few hours.

In contrast, Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians that as Christians we will receive an imperishable crown. Nothing can destroy the crowns that will be given to Christians for faithful service. Here Paul explains why he was willing to take the time to learn to understand the people to whom he shared the Gospel. He was looking forward to the eternal reward and not just a crown of leaves that would quickly fade away. In the same way we want to be an example to our children of the importance of living our lives in such a way that the things that we do have eternal value so that we will receive an eternal reward.

Paul then pointed to his own example to encourage the Corinthians to follow his example and learn to become all things to all people for the purpose of seeing some place their faith in Christ. I Corinthians 9:26-27 says, "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as *one who* beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring *it* into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." Here Paul explained why he had chosen to become a bondsman to all and take the time to understand each person so that they could hear the Gospel in a way that they could understand.

Paul was willing to make the necessary sacrifices in his own life so that he could win the race for the reward that the Lord offers to each one of us who choose to be faithful. Paul said that he did not just shadow box by pretending to hit the air around him. Instead he made the choices to submit his body to the Lord and discipline his body so that he could effectively reach both Jews and Gentiles for Christ. We saw that he had chosen to walk in an orderly fashion according to the law in order to reach the Jews. He did not expect the Gentiles to even learn or understand the Jewish law because his desire was to reach the Gentiles. Instead he chose to discipline himself so that he could present the Gospel to them effectively in a way that they could understand. Paul practiced self discipline in all areas of his life so that he would not be disqualified and not allowed to participate in the work of the Lord. In the same way, we want to show our children by our example the importance of making sure that we do not disqualify ourselves by sin so that they will make it their goal to serve effectively. May the Lord richly bless you as you make sacrifices in your own life to have an effective ministry to others.

Learning to Resist Temptation

In our last topic we saw that Paul gave us an example of learning to minister to people by setting aside our own desires so that we can effectively communicate the Gospel to people of other backgrounds in a way that they can understand. We want to provide a similar example to our physical and spiritual children so that they will see what it means to set aside their own desires to effectively communicate the Gospel. We also saw that Paul helped the Corinthians to understand the freedom that we have in Christ as Paul set aside his own desires and disciplined himself in order to effectively share the Gospel with the Corinthians.

However, it is possible to misuse that freedom to satisfy the sinful desires of the flesh instead of using that freedom to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Instead of using their liberty to serve one another in love, Israel left the slavery of Egypt and used the freedom that they experienced in the wilderness to practice various forms of sin. As a result, we will look at the example of Israel and be shown why we want to resist temptation instead of using our freedom to sin.

In I Corinthians 10:1-4 we read, “Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.” Here we see that God brought the entire nation of Israel out of the slavery of Egypt. He protected them from the heat of the desert by a cloud. He opened the Red Sea so that Israel could escape when Pharaoh came after them and then destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptian army in the Red Sea.

Israel was also baptized into Moses so that they became a part of his life as he followed the Lord and led them through the wilderness. God provided them with manna for forty years in the wilderness and provided them with water to meet their needs in the wilderness. In addition, we are told that the spiritual Rock followed them and provided everything that they needed. The word translated “Rock” speaks of a great massive cliff of rock. In Matthew 16:18 we read, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” The Greek word for Peter is *petros* which means a little rock. The Greek translated rock is *Petra* which means a great massive rock. Just as Christ is the great massive Rock foundation upon which Christ said He would build the church, we read that Christ was that great massive spiritual Rock that that provided everything that Israel needed in the wilderness.

The final verses of I Corinthians 9 talked about the way that Paul disciplined his life in order to effectively serve others and bring them to the Lord. Paul now shows us in I Corinthians 10 that Israel used their freedom to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh instead of choosing to serve one another in love. I Corinthians 10:5 says, “But with most of them God was not well pleased, for *their bodies* were scattered in the wilderness.” When Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, Moses

sent twelve spies to spy out the land of Canaan that later became the land of Israel. Ten of the spies focused on the giants and said Israel could not defeat them. Joshua and Caleb focused on the power of the Lord to give them victory. The people listened to the report of the ten spies and refused to enter the land. As a result, the people were forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. During those forty years all of the adults except Joshua and Caleb died in the wilderness with the result that their bodies were scattered across the wilderness.

We see that Paul said that the people of Israel in the wilderness became negative examples by using their freedom to satisfy the evil desires of the flesh. In I Corinthians 10:6-11 we read, "Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as *were* some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." The people of Israel used their freedom to commit various forms of sin.

We see that the real cause of the sin of Israel actually began in the hearts of the people. We see that they lusted after evil things. The word that is translated "lusted" means to have a strong desire for. Here we see that the people of Israel had a strong desire for evil things. Here we see the source of temptation. James 1:13-15 says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." The word that is translated "desires" here in James is the same root word that is translated lusted in I Corinthians 10. Lust for evil things will always give birth to sin and sin as it becomes full grown will result in death.

Some of the people of Israel lusted for the idols that they had worshiped while they were in Egypt. As a result, they asked Aaron to make a golden calf while Moses was up on Mount Sinai receiving the law. Exodus 32:6 says, "Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." That day three thousand were killed by the Levites. Exodus 32:28 says, "So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day." God then sent a plague in verse 35 and apparently 20,000 more were killed that day. Many years later the people also offered sacrifices to the gods of the Moabites. Number 25:9 says, "And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand." As a result, we know that there were at least these two incidents where many people died as a result of worshiping idols. Both of these incidents also involved sexual immorality among the people.

In Numbers 21 the people spoke against God and against Moses. They were actually speaking against Christ because we have seen that He was the Rock that was their provider. At that time God sent fiery serpents among the people. Many died and God told Moses to make the bronze serpent. Those who showed faith and looked at the bronze serpent lived. Those who failed to look died. John 3:14-15 says, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so

must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” Christ is the Rock who saved both in the Old Testament and still saves today. When the people complained in Numbers 16, we see that many were destroyed by the destroyer.

Paul said that all these things happened in the Old Testament happened to the people of Israel as negative examples for us. Paul said that they are a warning to us and to all those upon whom the end of the ages have come. We see that Christ came at the end of the ages to put away sin. Hebrews 9:26 says, “He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” Here we see that Christ came at the end of the ages to put away sin by His death and resurrection. Christ did this to set us free from sin and that is why Galatians 5:13 reminds us that we are to use that freedom to serve one another in love.

Just as Israel thought that they could stand and fell into sin, we see that what happened to Israel is to be a warning to us. That is why I Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.” If we think that we can stand in our own strength we are warned that we also may fall. That is why it is so important for us to help our physical and spiritual children understand how to resist temptation.

In I Corinthians 10:13 we read, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.” As Christians we do face temptation. However, God is faithful. God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able. God will always make a way of escape from temptation. That is why we want to help our children understand how to escape temptation. After talking about the temptation of the love of money in I Timothy 6:10, Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 6:11-12, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.” We want to help our children learn to flee temptation, follow the things that strengthen, and fight the good fight of faith.

Then Paul repeats similar instructions to Timothy in II Timothy. II Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Just as Paul was concerned for Timothy we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to flee youthful lusts, follow the things that strengthen their spiritual life and call on the Lord out of a pure heart. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to resist temptation.

Learning to Separate from False Worship

In our last topic we saw that the Lord gave us instructions to help our children learn to resist temptation. We also saw that God showed the negative consequences for Israel when the people chose to follow the evil desires of their hearts instead of resisting temptation. Just as Israel followed the idolatry of Egypt when they were in Egypt and then followed the evil desires of their own hearts and turned to idolatry in the wilderness, Paul realized that the Corinthian Christians had also grown up in a city that was filled with idols. Paul realized that the Corinthians could be easily tempted to continue to be involved in idolatry in their city. For that reason Paul warned the Christians in Corinth to flee from idolatry and from all forms of false worship.

After telling the Corinthians in verse 13 that God will provide a way to escape temptation, Paul said in I Corinthians 10:14, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” Before telling them to flee from idolatry, Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to know that he greatly loved them so he began this thought by calling them beloved. Paul had used this same word twice when he said in I Corinthians 4:14-17, “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. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that he considered them his beloved children so he reminded them again before telling them to flee from idolatry.

Paul used two illustrations to illustrate why it was important to flee idolatry. The first example was the relationship that we have with Christ as we share in the communion. I Corinthians 10:15-17 says, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, *though* many, are one bread *and* one body; for we all partake of that one bread.” Paul showed his respect for the Christians in Corinth by saying that he was speaking to them as one speaking to wise men. As wise men they would be able to judge for themselves and see if the illustrations that he used demonstrated why it was important for them to flee from idolatry.

As we have a communion service we drink the cup of blessing. Paul reminded the Corinthians that as we drink the cup that we are actually remembering the communion that we have with the Lord as we drink the cup that reminds us of the blood of Christ. The word that is translated “communion or fellowship” means to have in common, to have partnership with or to participate with. As a result, when we drink the cup we are showing that we are in partnership with Christ because He shed His blood for us and we are remembering that blood. I Corinthians 11:26 says, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.” We are publicly proclaiming that we are joined to the Lord by His death until He comes for us.

In the communion service we also break the bread. Paul explained that the bread is a reminder to us of the fact that as we break the bread it is the communion of the body of Christ. In I 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.” Each time we have a communion service we are celebrating the fact that we have all been made one body in Christ because of the fact that we have become one body through His death.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that we all partake of one bread. When you take a loaf of bread and break that loaf into many parts, those parts are all a part of the whole loaf. In the same way, even though we are many Christians we are all proclaiming our partnership with the Lord and focusing on the fact that we are one with Christ. As a result, we show in two different ways that we are joined to Christ every time that we have a communion service. By these two illustrations Paul made it very clear to the Corinthians why they should flee from idolatry. We have become one with Christ and we cannot be joined to idols at the same time.

Paul went on to use another illustration from the nation of Israel. I Corinthians 10:18 says, “Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” Throughout the Old Testament the people of Israel offered their sacrifices to the Lord. Some sacrifices would be entirely burned. However, with most of the sacrifices a part would go to the priests for their food and the rest of the sacrifice would go to the people so that they could eat the meat of the sacrifice. As the people ate the meat of the sacrifice they were partakers of the altar. In the same way if Paul is showing that if Christians offered a sacrifice to an idol that they were participating with that idol.

Paul went on to say in I Corinthians 10:19-20, “What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idols is anything? 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.” Paul made it clear that the idols have no power within themselves. However, the people of Corinth felt that their idols had power. Paul explained that the people were actually worshiping demonic power. The people of Israel had even offered their children as sacrifices. Psalm 106:37-38 says, “They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood.” Paul pointed out that when the people offered their children as sacrifices to idols that they were actually offering them as sacrifices to demons.

In the same way Paul made it clear that when the people of Corinth offered their sacrifices to idols that they were actually offering their sacrifices to demons and not to God. As a result, that was why Paul had warned the Christians to flee from idolatry because he did not want them to continue to have fellowship with demons. Deuteronomy 32:17 says that the sacrifices of idols were definitely not to God. That verse says, “They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to *gods* they did not know, to new *gods*, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear.” Any sacrifice to a demon is to a false god that the people do not and cannot know.

Paul went on to write in I Corinthians 10:21-22, “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. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?” Here we see that Paul tells why it was important for the Corinthian Christians to separate from the false worship and the offering of sacrifices to idols. Paul said that it is impossible to have fellowship with God and fellowship with demons. In I John 1:6-7 we read, “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.” Fellowship with demons is walking in darkness. Fellowship with Christ is walking in the light. It is totally impossible to walk both in darkness and in the light at the same time.

As a result, Paul said that it was impossible for the Corinthians to participate at the Lord's table and at the same time participate at the demon's table. In the same way we need to help our children learn to understand and explain to others that they cannot participate in both the Lord's table and the table of demons at the same time. Many people today have also participated in false religions before they became Christians. Just like some of the Corinthians, they think that they can continue to participate in those false religions while at the same time say that they are following the Lord. We want to help our children learn to explain to such individuals that they cannot walk in darkness and walk in the light at the same time.

Paul also said that we provoke the Lord to jealousy by trying to worship both God and demons at the same time. God said in Deuteronomy 32:21, “They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation.” God is a holy God and will not share His glory with any false gods. That is why Paul wrote to the Corinthians again in II Corinthians 6:16-17, “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.” We want to help both our physical and spiritual children understand that God wants all Christians to recognize that their bodies are the temple of the living God.

We all need to realize that Christ said in Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” Because all authority belongs to Christ and He is over all things, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn the importance of helping weak and struggling Christians realize that the only way that they can become strong Christians is by separating themselves from false worship. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help others separate from false worship.

Learning to Do All to the Glory of God

In our last topic we saw that we are to help our children learn to understand the importance of helping new Christians separate from false worship. We saw that those who offer sacrifices to idols are actually sacrificing to demons and as Christians we are not to have fellowship with demons. The discussion about things offered to idols led to a related question. Should Christians eat food that had been offered to idols if they were served that food while having dinner at the home of a person that was not a Christian? The principle that Paul gave to the Corinthians in answer to that question will also give our children a principle that will help them to know how to act in many different situations today. That will be the focus of this topic.

Paul began his answer to this question by giving a key principle for all of us to understand. I Corinthians 10:23-24 says, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*." Galatians 3:24-25 says that the purpose of the law is to show us that we are sinners and need to come to Christ. However, once we come to Christ we are no longer under the law because we can never grow in our spiritual lives by trying to keep the law. That means that all things are lawful for Christians. However, we also see that all things are not helpful and all things do not edify. We want to help our children understand that just because something is lawful it does not always mean that it is beneficial either for self or for others.

We also see that we are to help our children learn to seek the well-being of others. 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." This verse says that we are to use our liberty to serve others and not to satisfy ourselves. Mark 10:42-44 says, "But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 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 people of the world want to be served and tell others what to do. In contrast, Christ said that true greatness happens in our lives when we serve others and help them develop their full potential for ministry. In this way we are seeking the well-being of others and doing what will help others become what God plans for them to be.

Paul gives us an example of the way that we can exercise our liberty. I Corinthians 10:25-27 says, "Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for 'the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness.'" If any of those who do not believe invites you to *dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake." Our liberty means that we are free to eat whatever is sold in the marketplace. Christ told Peter in Acts 10:12-15, "In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat." But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean." And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common." As

Christ spoke to Peter from heaven, He said that God has cleansed all things. As a result, we can feel free to eat anything that is sold in the marketplace.

However, we are also told not to ask any questions about those things in the market place for the sake of our conscience. In the previous verses of this chapter we saw that some of the things that were sold in the marketplace had previously been offered to idols. That is why we are told to ask no questions. If a person were to ask questions in such a situation, that person might be told that the meat he was about to purchase had previously been offered to idols. In such a case, the conscience of a person might bother him especially if he was a weak Christian. We see that it is allowable to eat all things because God is the Creator of all things. In fact Genesis 1:31 says, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day." In this verse we see that everything that God created is very good.

Paul also told the people of Corinth that they should feel free to accept an invitation to dinner of a person that was not a Christian. Christ was often criticized by the Jewish religious leaders for eating with tax collectors and sinners. Matthew 9:10-12 says, "Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, *that* behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" When Jesus heard *that*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick." In this way Christ pointed out that eating dinner with a person that is not a follower of Christ offered an excellent opportunity to help that person learn how to have their sin forgiven by Christ.

Paul said that when we accept an invitation to eat dinner with a person that is not a Christian that we should eat whatever food is served. We should avoid asking if that food was bought from a place where it had been offered to an idol. Such questions would offend the person giving the dinner and would create a barrier to sharing the Gospel instead of providing an opportunity to share the Gospel.

However, Paul went on to say in I Corinthians 10:28-30, "But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness." "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience? But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for *the food* over which I give thanks?" If the person giving the dinner tells you before you eat that the food was offered to idols, then you should avoid eating the food that was offered to idols for the sake of the conscience of the person who told you. We can help our children to understand the difference in these two situations. Although we are free to eat whatever is served because God is the Creator of all things, if a person tells us before eating that the food was offered to idols we should avoid eating that food for the sake of his conscience.

Here we see a key distinction. The person who told us that the food was offered to idols is dealing with his own conscience. The question is not about our own conscience. As Christians, there is not problem with the food. The problem is with the conscience of the other person. For the well-being of the conscience of that person, we should choose to avoid eating the food that was offered to idols. Here we see that we do one thing when nothing is said about the source of

the food. We do the opposite when the person tells us the source of the food. That is an example of what it means to set aside our liberty for the well-being of another person.

Here we see that we want to help our children learn to allow their lives to be an example to others in every situation. I Corinthians 10:31-33 says, “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 see that the thing that should be the basis for every decision that we make is our desire to bring glory to God. We bring glory to God by doing what would be best for the well-being of the other person. If the person is a weak Christian, that will help him to grow stronger. If the person is not a Christian, our desire is to lead that person to Christ. When we consider what will be best for others we do bring glory to God.

Paul made the choice not to let his personal liberty offend the Jews by what he did. He made the choice not to offend the Gentiles by his personal liberty. He made the choice not to offend a weaker Christian by his liberty. In fact Paul said in I Corinthians 9:20-23, “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the law, as under the law, that I might win those *who are* under the law; to those *who are* without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those *who are* without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all *men*, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with *you*.” Paul was willing to make whatever personal sacrifices were necessary in order to avoid offending anyone because of his liberty. His whole desire was to bring glory to God.

Paul said that it was his desire to please all people in all things. Instead of doing those things that would only benefit himself, he chose to do those things that would benefit others to first bring them to Christ and then to help them grow to spiritual maturity. Here we see an example for our own lives. If we choose to make it our goal to bring glory to God in all that we do, it will also be our desire to serve others by doing the things that benefit others instead of doing the things that will benefit ourselves. Just as it was the desire of Paul to profit others by the choices that he made for his life, it will be our desire to profit others by the choices that we make for our life. That is what will make it possible for us to say as Paul says in I Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” When we imitate the example of Christ, we can feel free to invite both our physical and our spiritual children to imitate us. The result will be that we will be able to say to our physical and spiritual children the same thing that Paul said to the Thessalonians believers in I Thessalonians 1:6-7, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” May the Lord richly bless you as you give your children an example to imitate.