



Developing the Biblical Foundation for a Godly Family

**Growing Godly Families Series
Manual I**

by

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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.

The Biblical Foundation for the Family

Today we are beginning a new series of topics on the family. In this series of topics we will focus on two kinds of families. All of us understand the concept of the physical family. We are all a part of a physical family. We came into that physical family by physical birth or we came into that family by adoption. The only people that came into a physical family any other way were Adam and Eve. We will look at how God formed the human family in this topic.

However, the Bible also talks about a spiritual family. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." Nicodemus had these two kinds of birth explained to him in John 3:3-6 says, "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Nicodemus had experienced physical birth but Christ said that he had to be born of the Holy Spirit in order to experience spiritual birth. In the following topics we will see that we can make many comparisons between the physical family and the spiritual family.

In Genesis 2:20-24 we read, "So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

In this passage we learn several things about the way that God formed the first family on the earth. First, we see that the Lord had to show Adam that he was not complete by himself. As a result, God brought all of the animals to Adam so that he could name them. Adam saw that there were pairs of animals, there were pairs of birds and there were pairs of the various beasts of the field. However, Adam did not see any helper that was comparable to him. The first thing that Adam had to see was to see that he had a need for other human beings that could communicate with him because he could not communicate with any of the animals, birds or beasts that he had named.

Second, we see that God formed the partner for Adam by putting him to sleep and performing the first surgery. All of the animals had been formed by God just speaking and they came into existence. Genesis 1:24-25 says, "Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind"; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good." In these verses we see that God spoke the words and the animals came into existence.

However, God did something quite different when He created Adam. Genesis 2:7 says, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Here we see that God gave very personal attention to the creation of man. God took dirt from the earth, formed it into the shape of a man and breathed His own breath into that man that He had formed so that man became a living being because of the very breath of God. Here we see that God gave special time to the creation of Adam.

Then we see that God did the same thing when He created Eve. God took a rib from the side of Adam while Adam was asleep and from that rib formed a woman and brought her to the man. Eve was not taken from the head of man because God did not plan for woman to dominate the man. Eve was not taken from the foot of man because God did not plan for man to dominate or enslave the woman. Instead God took a rib from close to the heart of man to show Adam that he was to love and care for the woman that God had given him to make him complete. Adam recognized that she was now bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. It was only after sin came that this perfect relationship between man and woman was harmed.

Third, we see that God brought the woman to the man. Here we see that God performed the first marriage. God brought them together and made them a couple. Once man sinned, man began to have problems because mankind began to choose partners based on their own physical desires instead of asking God to lead them to a wife that would make them complete. We see this illustrated in Genesis 6:2 where we read, “That the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose.” Here we see that men began to choose their wives based on physical appearance instead of godly character. We restore the Biblical pattern when we pray that the Lord will lead us to a partner that has godly character.

Fourth, we see that God said that man was to leave his father and mother when he married a wife. This is rather unique in the case of Adam because he had no father and mother to leave. However, we see that God is giving a key principle for the establishment of a godly family. This is not talking about a new couple moving to a different area when they get married although that may happen. In many cultures two or more generations live together. What it is talking about is the decision making. When a man marries a wife, he is to move the decision making from making decisions with his parents to making decisions with his wife. God wanted Adam and Eve to know that they were to make decisions together.

Fifth, we see that God said that a man was to cleave to his wife. The word that is translated cleave is also used to speak of welding two pieces of metal together. As the metals are heated, both pieces of metal become a soft liquid that makes it possible for them to flow together. As the two pieces of metal flow together they are no longer two separate pieces of metal. Instead they have become one piece of metal. In fact if the metal was properly welded, the metals flow together so that the one piece is stronger than the original two pieces were originally. Here we see that God wanted couples to develop a very strong relationship with each other.

Sixth, God said that they were to become one flesh. One of the keys to a strong family is a strong marriage where couples learn to think “we and our” instead of “me and my”. In addition to physical oneness, this means that they learn to think and work together as a team. Many couples

never learn to think and work together as a team and that is one of the key hindrances to developing a godly family. In order to develop a godly family, couples need real teamwork.

We see a couple that demonstrates the fact that they had learned to think and work together as a team both physically and spiritually. In Acts 18:2-3 we read, “And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them. So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.” These verses show us that this particular couple even worked together in their business.

However, we see that they also worked together as a spiritual team. We see this later in the same chapter. One day a man named Apollos began speaking in the synagogue about the teaching of John the Baptist. Aquila and Priscilla listened to him speak and realized that he knew nothing about the death and resurrection of Christ. This gave them an opportunity for spiritual ministry as a team. Acts 18:26 says, “So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.” Aquila and Priscilla chose to work as a spiritual team to help Apollos grow in his spiritual understanding.

We see the impact of this team ministry in the following two verses. Acts 18:27-28 says, “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.” Because Aquila and Priscilla had learned to work as a team, they developed a disciple that had a great impact for the Lord. We see a second illustration of their team ministry in Romans 16:3-5 where we read, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” Here we see that they had moved to Rome and had started a church in their home that was reaching out to others in Rome.

A godly couple that has learned to work together as a team provides a foundation for the development of additional godly families. This will be true in our own physical family. However, it will also be true in the development of many other spiritual families as we show others by our example how to serve the Lord together as a godly team. May the Lord richly bless your family as you are an example to others.

2.

The Biblical Foundation Marred by Sin

God established the ideal marriage and laid the foundation for the family when He brought Adam and Eve together and made them one. However, that ideal marriage and family was marred by sin. That happened as a result of the choice to sin. There were five consequences of that sin. Today we will look at the consequences because those consequences continue to have a major affect on family life. In fact those consequences lead to the destruction of many families.

Before we look at the consequences of sin, let's look at how we are tempted to sin. In I John 2:16 we read, "For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world." Genesis 3:6 shows that Adam and Eve failed in all three of these areas, "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate." We see:

The lust of the flesh – it was good for food

The lust of the eyes – it was pleasant to the eyes

The pride of life – it was desirable to make one wise

Romans 5:12 tells us the ultimate consequence of that sin for all mankind. That verse says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned." Many people want to blame Eve for that sin but Adam is the one that God held accountable. The last phrase of verse six says that Eve "gave to her husband with her, and he ate." Adam was standing right there with Eve and did nothing to protect her from the temptations of Satan. As a result, God held him accountable.

Genesis 3:8 shows the first immediate consequence of sin. That verse says, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden." God came to meet with Adam and Eve as He usually did and they hid themselves. Their sin led to immediate spiritual death which is separation from God. This consequence deals with man's relationship with God.

Genesis 3:10 gives us three more immediate consequences of sin. That verse says, "So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." Here we see that this verse gives three consequences of sin:

Fear – I was afraid

Guilt – I was naked

Shame – I hid myself

These three consequences deal with man's relationship with himself.

Genesis 3:12 says, "Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." Here we see that the fifth immediate consequence of sin is blame. First, Adam blamed God for giving him the woman. Second, he blamed Eve for giving him the fruit (remember he had been standing there with her). This consequence deals with man's relationship with others.

These five consequences of sin, separation from God; fear, guilt and shame within; and blame of others have been the five things that have motivated every person since the time of Adam. Every person is driven by fear until his life is transformed by Christ. In fact many Christians are still driven by fear. As a result, they drive others. Only as we grow and mature in Christ and learn to be led by the love of Christ are we able to lead others instead of driving them. Remember, if we are driven by fear we will drive others. If we are led by the love of Christ, we will lead others. This is the reason that many families have created barriers in the family that separate the family members from one another. God wants us to replace the barriers with bridges so that we can minister to 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."

To build godly families we must learn to reverse the effects of original sin. We will give a brief summary of how we reverse those effects in the rest of this topic. The first consequence of sin is separation from God. This is reversed by relationship and fellowship. God sent Christ to make it possible for us to reestablish our relationship with Him by becoming His children. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." The second part of reversing this separation is fellowship. I John 1:3 and 7 say, "That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ...But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Here we see that we help people begin to reverse the effects of original sin by leading them to Christ and then showing them how to develop fellowship with Christ.

We help people learn to reverse the effects of fear by learning to take root in the love of Christ. In Ephesians 3:17-19 we have a model of the way we can pray for others when it says, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." I John 4:18 tells us that perfect love casts out fear, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." Then II Corinthians 5:14-15 tells us that we become motivated by love instead of fear, "For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." As we help Christians take root in the love of Christ, that love will cast out fear and they will be led by the love of Christ and will lead others in love.

There are three key things that are involved in reversing the effects of guilt: forgiveness; cleansing and forgiving others. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." I John 2:1-2 tells us that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ paid for our sins. The Father showed that satisfaction by raising Christ from the dead. We want to help new Christians realize that all of their sins--past, present and future--were paid for by Christ on the cross and that when they repented of sin and placed their trust in Christ that they were forgiven.

However, we need the moment by moment cleansing that comes as a result of confession of sin. The night before His crucifixion Christ gave Peter an illustration of the difference between forgiveness and cleansing as He was washing the feet of the disciples. John 13:10-11 says, "Jesus said to him, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you." For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, "You are not all clean." Christ was showing Peter that Peter needed the daily cleansing from sin but that a disciple that Christ did not name (Judas) needed the bath that would only come through repentance and faith.

One thing that many Christians say is that they don't always feel forgiven. At that point we need to share Ephesians 4:32 with them which says, "And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." The reason that they do not feel forgiven is usually due to the fact that they are unwilling to forgive someone else. Often they will respond that they cannot forgive a person for what they have done. At that point ask them why God forgave them. You may have to read through the verse several times before they finally realize that God forgave them "for Christ's sake". People often cannot forgive in their own strength but they can pray that Christ will give them His strength to forgive for His sake.

We help people learn to reverse the consequences of shame as we help them to come to a full understanding of II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Most people try to change their outward appearance because of their shame. They will never succeed because shame comes from the inner man. Hebrews 10:19 and 22 say, "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." In Christ, we can stand before the Father without sin because He looks at us through the righteousness of Christ.

We learn to help people reverse the consequences of blame as they learn to take responsibility for their own choices and the consequences of those choices. Instead of telling a person that he or she has to do something, ask them what their choices are in that situation. In most cases there are five or six or more choices. Then ask them what consequences will come from each of the choices. Ask them to cross out those sets of consequences that they do not want to happen in their lives. Then encourage them to pray and ask the Lord to give them His peace about which of the remaining choices will be best for them in their situation. Share Philippians 4:4-9 with them and then help them understand that God promises to give His peace in verse 7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." May the Lord richly bless you as you help people learn to reverse the effects of original sin and learn to walk in fellowship with Christ and with the family of Christ.

3.

The Biblical Foundation for Teaching Values

A key to the development of any family is the process by which a family communicates its values to the next generation. God used Moses to give a key summary of the process for passing on values to the next generation in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. Those verses say, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

First, we see that a godly family communicates what is the basis for spiritual life in that family. In order for our family to have a strong spiritual life, we must choose to make the Lord our God. Today the world has many gods – money, power, pleasure, success, education, idols and many other things that are the most important thing to the various families of the world. However, we see that if we are going to effectively teach values to our family that we must make Jesus Christ the center of our family and not let anything else become more important so that it becomes the god that really leads our family.

Second, we see that a godly family communicates what is important to the parents by example. If we are going to develop godly values (what is important to us) in our family, we make the choice to love the Lord with our whole heart, soul and strength. Here we see that our heart or our inner man (human spirit) is where we begin. Children quickly learn what values are important to us as parents by the example that we provide as parents. If our words say that something is important to us but our actions do not agree, children will quickly learn from our example what is really important to us. That is why an angry parent will develop angry children and a thankful parent will develop thankful children. Our children will become what we are.

Third, we see that a godly family must have a value system that influences our heart, our mind, emotions and will because that will determine our actions. What is important to us in our heart will determine our character. If we are regularly yielding our lives to the Lord so that He is working in our hearts, we will develop godly character. This means that the things that are important to the Lord are the things that are becoming important to us. This will give us a desire to please the Lord and bring honor to His name in all that we do.

What is important to us in our mind, emotions and will determine how we think, feel and make choices. Romans 12:2 says, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." We renew and transform our minds as we think and talk about the Word of God. I John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." We become motivated by love instead of fear as we take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). We carry out the will of God as we yield our will to Him. Christ gave us the example when He said in

Matthew 26:39b, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.”

When it is important to us to please the Lord and carry out His will, that attitude will determine our actions. We will look for opportunities to spend time with others who will equip us and our family to serve the Lord. We will ask these other individuals to show us how to serve the Lord effectively (develop effective ministry skills). Then we will look for opportunities to serve the Lord as a family and pray that the Lord will give us boldness to speak for Him. We will follow the example of the early Christians in Acts 4:29 where they prayed, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word.” As we develop effective ministry skills as a family and pray for boldness, the Lord will work in our lives and then through our lives.

Fourth, we see that a godly family must have the Word of God in their hearts and not just their heads. Here we see the difference between knowing the Word of God and practicing the Word of God. We memorize and meditate on the Word of God as a family to learn how to avoid sin. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!” We can memorize the Word but we will not have it in our hearts unless we meditate on it. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” As we think about the Word of God in our hearts, then we pray and ask the Lord to give us His strength to carry out the things that He tells us that we are to do in order to be obedient to Him.

Fifth, we see that a godly family teaches those values to their children. It is interesting that the first four things primarily are the values of the parents. As we come to this point, we see how we are to communicate these same values to our children. Here we see that we are to teach to our children the things that are important to us. We teach in two ways. We teach the Word of God by helping our children to learn what the Word of God means. Then we help them to really understand what it means by showing them through our attitudes and actions. Only as we teach by example where our attitudes and our actions agree with our words will our children begin to make these same things important to them in their lives.

Sixth, we see that a godly family looks for teachable moments. Deuteronomy 6:7 says that we are to teach our children as we sit in our house and as we go about our activities throughout the day. We are also to help our children learn to think about the Word of God as they prepare to go to sleep at night. Then we are to help our children learn to think about the Word of God as they begin their day each morning. Here we see that we are to help them learn how to apply the Word of God to their lives throughout the day. We do this as we share Biblical principles with them as we answer their questions and as we help them to think and apply the Word to the situations that they face each day.

Seventh, we see that a godly family helps those values to become a part of their actions. Verse 8a says, “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand...” We show our children how to put the Word of God into practice in our daily lives by example. As they see how we apply the Word of God in our own lives, they will learn to do the same. Paul said the same thing to his spiritual children

when he said in I Thessalonians 1:6, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” People learn to follow the Lord by following the Lord’s people. In the same way our children learn to follow the Lord as they observe our lives and see that we are following the Lord.

Eighth, we see that a godly family helps those values to become a part of their thoughts. Verse 8b says, “...they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.” There are five main ways that children or adults learn the Word of God: hearing; reading, studying; memorizing; and meditating. Children learn what God says as we read the Bible to them long before they can even begin to read for themselves so we need to read the Bible to them from the time that they are born. We can also help them begin to memorize the Word long before they can read. However, as they grow we also want to show them the importance of reading and studying the Word of God by our example. Then we want to help them learn to meditate on the Word by asking them questions about what we are learning together.

Ninth, we see that a godly family makes those values clear in their home. Verse 9 says, “You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” Here we see that we help children to know and remember the instructions of the Lord by having Bible verses posted in various parts of the house so that they are a constant reminder to the entire family. However, we must do more than just write and post them in the house. We take opportunities to discuss with our children how we can all put these verses into practice in our lives. We help our children learn to apply the Word both by their actions in the home and in their actions when they are away from home. In this way they are learning to apply the Word of God to daily living throughout the day and wherever they go during the day.

Our families will have a real impact on the people that live around us as others see that our lives show that the love of Christ is controlling our lives. All people are either driven by their fears or they are led by the love of Christ. That is why we are told to take root in Christ and His love. Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Then Ephesians 3:17-19 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” We teach our families to love as we show the love of Christ in our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show others how the love of Christ can transform their lives by your example.

4.

The Biblical Foundation for Leading Children to Christ

The greatest concern of every godly parent should be to lead their own children to Christ. We see the impact of a godly grandparent, a godly parent and a spiritual parent in II Timothy 1:3-5. Those verses say, "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, 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." We see that in the case of Timothy it was both a physical grandparent and physical parent as well as a spiritual parent that helped Timothy to develop as an effective spiritual leader for the Lord.

Lois and Eunice helped Timothy to come to a true faith in Christ. Later Paul had the opportunity to become a spiritual parent to Timothy and help him become equipped to develop and expand his ministry for Christ. Today we want to focus on how his mother and grandmother helped Timothy develop a genuine faith in the Lord. These verses point out that the most important thing that helped Timothy to develop a genuine faith was their example. The word that is translated "genuine" in these verses is used six times in the New Testament. It speaks of something that is genuine or without hypocrisy. This is a key to understanding the impact of Lois and Eunice in the life of Timothy.

A hypocrite was an actor who wore a mask in a play to show the character of the person that he was supposed to represent. An actor would use several different masks during a play to represent different people. As a result, it came to mean a person who is one thing when others can see him and something different when the world is not watching. To have a genuine faith is the opposite. It means a faith that does not change whether anyone is watching or not. Timothy had seen that the faith of his mother and grandmother was the same when they were home alone as when other people were watching them. That is why example is such a key in the spiritual development of a child. When a child sees that a parent is consistent whether or not anyone else is watching, that child knows that he can trust the example of his parent or parents.

However, Lois and Eunice did more than just provide an example for Timothy. II Timothy 3:14-15 says, "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 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." Here we see that Lois and Eunice began teaching the Word of God to Timothy while he was a child. We see that they had followed the instructions given in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and taught Timothy from infancy.

They had diligently taught Timothy from the earliest days of his life. The word that is translated child speaks of a newborn child. It is used twice in Luke 1 to speak of Christ before He was even born. Then it is used of Christ twice in Luke 2 to speak of Christ when the shepherds came to visit Him right after He was born. Luke 18:15 says that parents brought their infants to Christ so that He

could bless them. Acts 7:19 uses the word to speak of the babies that were killed by Pharaoh in Egypt. It is also used in I Peter 2:2 where we read, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." This is the only other place that this word is used. Here we see that the time to begin teaching children the Word of God is right from birth. This was what Lois and Eunice had done.

In addition to teaching Timothy the Holy Scriptures, we see that they had taught him specific things from the Scripture. It says that they had taught him those things that were able to make him wise unto salvation. Remember that Lois and Eunice did not have the New Testament. They only had the Old Testament. However, they helped Timothy to understand what the Old Testament taught about the way to receive salvation. Here we see that his grandmother and mother were Old Testament saints that looked forward to the time when Christ would come to take away sin instead of just cover sin.

Timothy had been taught many things from the Old Testament as he grew as a boy. He had learned how sin changed the life of Adam and Eve. Lois and Eunice may even have shown Timothy from Genesis 3:7-13 that sin changed our relationship with God - there is separation; our relationship within ourselves - we are now motivated by fear, guilt and shame; and our relationship with others - there is blame. The reality of sin and the consequences of sin are things that all godly parents need to teach their children so that children realize from an early age that sin produced separation from God and that they need their relationship with God restored.

As Lois and Eunice taught Timothy the Scriptures, passages like Genesis 4:1-5 provided them with the opportunity to help Timothy understand that his own efforts could never remove the separation between him and God. In those verses God made it clear for Timothy and everyone else that the fact that because Cain depended on his own efforts his sacrifice was rejected. He had to learn from the example of Abel that there must be an offering for sin that God would accept. Isaiah 64:6 also makes this same point clear when it says, "But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away." As a result of this kind of teaching from early childhood, Timothy knew that He had to place his faith in the promises of God and not in his own efforts.

Every year the Jewish Day of Atonement reminded both children and adults that sin must be covered until God provided a sacrifice that would take away sin. All Jews were required to fast on the Day of Atonement so that parents could teach their children the fact that sin must be covered until God provided a sacrifice that would take away sin. That was why the statement of John the Baptist in John 1:29 had such a powerful impact on the disciples of John the Baptist. That verse says, "The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Godly parents used opportunities like the Day of Atonement to teach their children that sin must be covered until God sent One that could take away sin.

Of course the parents could also use the Passover lamb each year to show that God required the sacrifice of a lamb without spot or blemish to cover sin so that the death angel could pass over that house when he killed the oldest child in each family in Egypt. These and the other feasts and sacrifices meant that parents had many opportunities throughout the year to teach their children about the need for salvation to both cover and take away sin. We see that Lois and Eunice both

were able to share the Old Testament Scriptures with Timothy so that He knew that a sacrifice was needed to pay for sin so that his sin could be covered and removed.

Although we do not know what passages Timothy learned, he probably became very familiar with passages like Isaiah 55:6-7. Those verses say, “Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.” This passage and many other Old Testament passages point out the need to turn from sin and turn back to God (repentance).

When Paul and Barnabas came to the area when Lois, Eunice and Timothy lived on their first ministry trip, Acts 14:21 says that they preached the Gospel in Derbe. That was probably where the three first heard about the death and resurrection of Christ. They heard that Christ had shed His blood to pay for sin. They heard that the Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ had made and showed that by raising Christ from the dead. As Old Testament saints, they and many others in that area repented of their sin and placed their trust in Christ and His payment for their sin. As a result of the patient teaching and training of Lois and Eunice while he was growing up, Timothy became a follower of Christ along with his mother and grandmother.

Here we see that example and the faithful teaching of the Word of God to children as they are growing will lead many children to place their trust in Christ while they are still children. They will know the importance of repenting of their sin and placing their faith in Christ because they have been taught those things from birth. In addition, as they see the example of how the Lord has changed and is continuing to change their parents, they will also see that their parents are learning to take root in the love of Christ so that they are led by the love of Christ. Scripture teaches that most children that are trained in this way will not depart from the love of Christ but instead will take root in His love. Christ showed in the parable about the prodigal son that even those who may rebel for a time will be drawn back to the parents and to Christ by the love of the parents.

One of the great privileges of a Christian parent or grandparent is to have the opportunity to teach our children and grandchildren by our example and by our words and then have the opportunity to lead them to Christ. It is as we teach them the Word of God that they will learn that they are separated from God by sin. They will learn that Christ died for their sin. They will learn that God was satisfied with the payment and showed it by raising Christ from the dead. They will come to understand that they need to repent of their sin of unbelief and ask Christ to forgive their sin and give them eternal life. As we pray for them we will see the Father work in their hearts and draw them to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you develop the Biblical foundation that will lead your children and grandchildren to Christ.

5.

The Biblical Foundation for Helping Children Grow Spiritually

In our last topic we saw that the mother and grandmother of Timothy helped to develop the foundation that Timothy needed in order to place his trust in Christ. Today we will be looking at the Biblical foundation for helping children to grow spiritually and to move toward spiritual maturity. II Timothy 3:15-17 says, “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. 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.” This is the process of helping a new Christian grow from the point of spiritual birth to the point where they become a man of God. These verses give us some key Biblical principles to help that growth occur.

Once a child or any other person places his or her trust in Christ, then there are some key principles to help them grow and mature spiritually. First, we see that the growth must have Scripture as the foundation. Verse 16 says that all Scripture is God-breathed. The view that a child develops of Scripture will have a very important impact on how that child will apply the Word of God to his life as that child grows and matures. If a child does not understand that all Scripture is God-breathed, that child will not expect the Word of God to change and transform his or her life. In contrast, if a child knows that all Scripture is God-breathed, that child will realize that the Word of God will change his or her life. Godly parents help a child to recognize that all Scripture is God-breathed.

Second, we see that all Scripture is profitable or useful. The word that is translated profitable is used four times in the New Testament. It is used twice in I Timothy 4:8 where we read, “For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.” Here we see that physical training is useful for some things but godliness is useful for all things both for the present and for the future. Titus 3:8 says, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.” Here we see that Christians are to pay attention and make sure that they do good works because these things are useful. As we combine these thoughts with II Timothy 3:16, they show us that all Scripture is useful to develop godly lives and to equip us for effective ministry to others. That is why godly parents want to help their children become familiar with the entire Bible.

Third, we see that all Scripture is profitable for doctrine. The word that is translated doctrine is used 21 times in the New Testament. Romans 15:4 says, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” In this verse the word is translated learning. We see that the entire Word of God was written for our learning so that we can grow as we learn, understand and apply the Word of God to our own lives. The Word of God helps us to know what we will become as our lives are being transformed by it. As we help our children learn, understand and apply all of Scripture to their lives their lives will also be transformed by the Word.

Fourth, we see that all Scripture is profitable for reproof. The word translated reproof is only used one other time in the New Testament. That is in Hebrews 11:1 where we read, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” In this verse the word is translated “evidence”. The verb form of this word is used 18 times including John 16:8-9 which says, “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.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces the people of the world of the sin of unbelief. Taken together we see that Scripture provides the evidence to convict those who are not Christians of their sin of unbelief. If our children are not yet Christians, the Word of God gives them evidence of their sin of unbelief.

For Christians we see that the Scriptures convict them of other sins. Hebrews 12:5 says, “And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.” Here we see that the Lord rebukes people of their sins when they hear the Word of God. This means that the Word of God shows people where they come short of what God wants them to become as they see what they are doing wrong. Christ shows them through the Word those areas where their lives still need to be transformed. As we teach our children the Scriptures, they are learning what areas of their lives need to change.

Fifth, we see that all Scripture is profitable for correction. This is the only place in the New Testament that the word translated correction is used. It means to restore something to its original or right state. When God created Adam and Eve, they were without sin. That was the original state of mankind. Sin completely changed that state. Mankind became controlled by separation from God, fear, guilt and shame within and blame of others. Christ is called the second Adam. Correction is helping a person learn to understand and apply the Word of God to their daily lives so that their lives are being transformed. As we help our children grow in their understanding and application of the Word of God to their lives, they are in the process of becoming more and more like the second Adam and less like the first Adam.

Sixth, all Scripture is profitable for instruction in righteousness. The word “instruction” is used in Ephesians 6:4 where it is translated training or nurture, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” The word that is translated righteousness is used 92 times in the New Testament and speaks of actions that are pleasing to God. These include things like integrity, purity of life, and right thinking, feeling and acting. As we instruct our children from the Word of God, our goal is to help them learn what the Word of God says about the way to grow in godly character and life.

Seventh, Paul told Timothy that the goal of parents teaching Scripture to their children is to help each child become a man of God. First we see that a man of God is a Christian that has become complete and mature. Colossians says that every Christian is complete in Christ, “And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.” However, Ephesians 4:14-15 warns that we are not to remain immature, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--...” Instead we are to grow and mature. As a result, our goal as parents is to help our children grow to spiritual maturity.

Eighth, Paul told Timothy that the second goal of parents teaching Scripture to their children is to equip their children to speak the Word of God to others. In the Old Testament we see that the phrase “man of God” is used seventy times and always spoke of a person that spoke for God. As Christians, I Peter 2:9 says that every Christian is a priest that is to speak for God, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Here we see a goal of our teaching as we teach our children is to equip them to speak for God.

Ninth, Paul told Timothy that we are also to equip our children in several other areas so that they are equipped for every good work. The other verse that uses the phrase “the man of God” in the New Testament is I Timothy 6:11, “But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” There were certain things that Timothy was told to flee. Those are areas that we need to show our children from Scripture are things that they need to avoid to be transformed. In verses 3-5 Timothy was told to flee from pride and the things that are the result of pride. In verses 9-10 Timothy was told to flee from the love of money and the things that go along with a love of money.

Timothy was also told to follow certain things. In verses 6-8 he was told to pursue godliness with contentment. Here in verse 11 he was told to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Then in verse 12 Timothy was told to, “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.” Finally in verses 13-16 Timothy was told to be faithful in following the example of Christ until Christ comes. As parents we are also to equip our children by our example and by our teaching of Scripture so that they begin to do these things in their lives.

The Lord has given us a great privilege as parents or church leaders. Many of us have physical children and we are to help them become mature and equipped for every good work. Some of us may not have physical children. However, all of us can have spiritual children as we teach the Scripture to newer Christians and show each one how to become a man or a woman of God. Just as most people have physical children, Christians are to grow and mature and then have spiritual children to whom they teach the Scripture and show how to become mature. Paul said in I Corinthians 4:17, “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.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help both physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity.

6.

The Biblical Foundation for Praying for Our Children

In I Samuel 1:10-11 Hannah prayed for a son and vowed that if the Lord gave her a son that she would give him to the Lord all the days of his life. After Samuel was born, Hannah returned to the place where she had prayed and said in I Samuel 1:27-28, "For this child I prayed, and the Lord has granted me my petition which I asked of Him. Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord." So they worshiped the Lord there." Here we see that Hannah prayed for a child and promised the Lord that she would lend that child to the Lord as long as he lived. This gives us a great example of the first thing that we pray for our children is for their salvation so that they can then serve the Lord as long as they live.

Once our children become Christians then we need to begin to pray for their spiritual growth and development. In I Thessalonians Paul, Silas and Timothy were writing to their spiritual children. The book begins by these men expressing their thanksgiving to God for certain things in the lives of their spiritual children. I Thessalonians 1:2-4 says, "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God." The first thing we see is that the foundation for prayer is thanksgiving to God for our children whether they are physical children or spiritual children.

Here we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy were thankful for three things. They gave thanks for the Thessalonians work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope. Here we see that the foundation of prayer for our children includes prayer for their growth in faith, growth in hope and growth in love. I Corinthians 13:13 says, "And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love." Since these are the three things that abide, these are three things we should pray for in the spiritual development of our children. These same three things show up in nearly all of the letters that Paul wrote.

In Ephesians 1:15-18 we read, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." In these verses we see that Paul gave thanks for their strong faith and love but could not give thanks for their hope. As a result, in his prayer to God for them Paul prayed that God would give them, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Here we see his prayer was that their hope would also grow strong.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, they were lacking all three things that abide: faith; hope; and love. However, Paul still gave thanks for them in his prayer. I Corinthians 1:4 says, "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus." Since

Paul could not give thanks for their faith, hope or love, he still gave thanks that God had showed His grace to them. Then he wrote in chapter three to help them grow and mature in their faith instead of remain as spiritual young children (toddlers). He wrote in chapter thirteen to help them grow and mature in their love instead of trying to use their spiritual gifts for self glory. Then he wrote in chapter fifteen to help them grow and mature in their hope by reminding them of the resurrection of Christ and the return of Christ as these are the two things that will strengthen hope. We want to help our children by praying that they will mature in their faith, hope and love.

Paul also focuses on five things he prayed for spiritual children in his prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3. We need to pray for these same five things as we pray for our physical and spiritual children. Ephesians 3:14-19 says, "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." In these verses we see five things for which to pray for our children.

1. That they would be strengthened with might in the inner man.
2. That Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith.
3. That they would be rooted and grounded in love.
4. That they would know the love of Christ that passes knowledge.
5. That they would be filled with all the fullness of God.

Once our children become Christians we need to pray that they will be strengthened with might in the inner man. The word that is translated might is the same word that is translated power in Acts 1:8 where we read, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Here we see that the Holy Spirit is the One that strengthens them with might as they learn to yield to the power of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we are actually praying that our children will learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. They will learn best how to yield to the Holy Spirit as they see in our lives that we are yielding to the Holy Spirit. That means that we need to learn to provide our children an example of yielding to the Holy Spirit as we pray for them.

Second, we see that we need to be praying for our children that Christ will dwell in their hearts by faith. The word dwell means to inhabit or to live within a person. In Matthew 12:45 it is used to talk about demons living within a person. In Colossians 2:9-10 it says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." In these verses we see that the entire Godhead dwells or lives in Christ. In fact that also means that we are complete because Christ dwells in us. John 14:23 tells us that as we are obedient to Christ and our hearts are cleansed from sin so that both Christ and the Father are at home in our lives. We want to pray that this will happen in the lives of each of our children.

Third, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will become rooted and grounded in love. There are four roots that can develop in the lives of people that are mentioned in the New Testament. Two are negative and two are positive. I Timothy 6:10 says, "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness,

and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Then Hebrews 12:15 says, “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.” In these verses we see that either a root of the love of money or a root of bitterness will be very destructive in the life of a person.

Colossians 2:6-7 says, “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.” Then our verse here in Ephesians 3:17 says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love.” In these two verses we see two very positive roots that we desire for our children and should pray that they will develop in the lives of our children. We need to pray daily that our children will be rooted and built up in Christ and rooted and grounded in His love. As children take root in Christ and His love their lives will be transformed.

Fourth, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will grow to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. In addition to praying that our children will take root in Christ and His love, Ephesians 3:18-19 says that we need to pray that they will grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them. These verses say, “May be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height--to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” The word “comprehend” means to lay hold of or make it our own. As our children are rooted and ground in love we want them to lay hold of the fullness of the love of Christ. We see that this love passes human knowledge and so it will only be experienced by those who are the children of God.

Fifth, we see that we need to be praying for our children that they will be filled with all the fullness of God. To be filled with all the fullness of God means that we are yielding the control of our life to the Father so that He fills our lives. In fact we need to pray both for ourselves and for our children that the entire Godhead will fill our lives. Ephesians 4:13 says, “Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Then Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” As we model this fullness of the Godhead in our lives and pray that it will develop in the lives of our children we will see the Lord work mightily both in our lives and in theirs.

In fact we see the results of such prayer in Ephesians 3:20-21 where we read, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” May the Lord richly bless you and your children as you pray for their spiritual development.

7.

The Biblical Foundation for Growth in Knowledge

In Exodus 18:19-21 Moses was given five priorities for spiritual leadership. Those verses say, “Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” These five priorities for Moses also give us five priorities for our lives as parents. As we apply these five priorities to our lives as parents, we see that we are to:

Pray for our children.

Teach our children the Word of God.

Show our children the way to walk.

Show our children how to work for the Lord.

Share the work with our children.

In our last topic we talked about the first of these five priorities, “The Biblical Foundation for Praying for Our Children.” Today we will be talking about the second of these priorities. We want to help our children grow in their knowledge of Christ and of His Word. II Peter 3:18 says, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.” We want to focus on Biblical principles that will help our children grow in grace and the principles that will help them grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Peter gave us some key principles for this growth in II Peter 1:2-8.

II Peter 1:2 says, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.” In this verse we see that grace and peace will be multiplied in the lives of our children as they grow in their knowledge of what the Word of God teaches about the Father and what it teaches about Christ. This means that the foundation for helping our children grow in knowledge is to teach them what the Bible says about the Father and what it says about Christ. This means that our goal will be to help them become familiar with the entire Word of God. The only way we can help our children become familiar with the whole Word of God is to become familiar with it ourselves so that we can teach them the Word both by our words and by our example.

II Peter 1:3 says, “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” This verse gives us some key principles for the spiritual growth of ourselves and our children. We see that the source of all learning is the divine power of Christ. 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.” We cannot help our children grow in the knowledge of Christ by human wisdom. Instead we must be taught by the Holy Spirit so that we can compare spiritual things with spiritual. We will only be able to understand the things that pertain to life and godliness as we let the Holy Spirit teach us.

A second thing that we see is that Christ has given us the full knowledge about how to have spiritual life and how to grow in godliness in His Word. We want to teach our children from the earliest age what the Bible teaches them about the way to have eternal life through repentance from sin and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Once they place their trust in Christ we want to continue to teach them so that they will learn how to grow in godliness. This teaching about growth in godliness is taught by example as we grow in godliness in our own lives. In addition to providing an example, we also teach our children what the Word of God says about growing in godliness.

A third thing we see in II Peter 1:3 is that Christ gives us a goal for our teaching. We want to show and teach our children that Christ has called us to a life of glory and virtue. Christ gave us the example by His own life of what He wants us to become. It should be our goal to bring glory to Christ by the life that we live. That way we provide our children with an example so that they see how their lives can bring glory to Christ. The word that is translated “virtue” means moral goodness or moral excellence. Here we see that we help our children learn to bring glory to Christ by living a life of moral excellence.

II Peter 1:4 says, “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” Here we see that Christ has given us promises that are exceedingly great and very precious. At the moment of spiritual birth, we were made new creations. II Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” We want to help our children grow in their understanding of what it means to be a new creation. We help them to understand that they have now been given the divine nature or new nature and that Galatians 2:20 says that Christ now lives in them.

The fact that Christ now lives in them also means that they have been set free from the bondage of Satan and sin. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” When our children put their trust in Christ we want to help them understand that they have been set free from the bondage of Satan. This now gives them the freedom to serve others 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.”

II Peter 1:5-7 says, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” Here the Lord gives us a list of key areas where we want to help our children develop. We see that we want them to develop in the areas of:

Faith – God gave us our faith as a gift – Ephesians 2:8-9

Virtue – we saw in verse 3 that this word means moral goodness or moral excellence

Knowledge – understanding of the Word through study – II Timothy 2:15

Self-control – one who exercises control over sinful desires – Galatians 5:23

Perseverance – endurance and patience in doing what is right – Hebrews 10:36

Godliness – living in obedience to God – James 1:22

Brotherly kindness – loving one another as God has loved us – I Thessalonians 4:9

Love – we are to love others as Christ loved us – John 13:34-35

We will only help our children grow in these areas as we model these things by our own behavior.

II Peter 1:8 says, “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” If we are helping our children to develop the things that are listed in the previous verses God says that they will not be barren or unfruitful in their knowledge of Christ. That is why we want these things to abound in our lives so that our children will be able to have an example to follow so that these things develop in their lives. I Corinthians 11:1 says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” As we imitate Christ in our own lives, our children will see how to imitate Christ in their lives.

In addition to helping our children grow in Christ, we also want to help them grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. This involves more than just hearing or reading the Word of God. II Timothy 2:15 tells us that we need to show our children how to study the Word of God. That verse says, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” Then Psalm 119:9-11 says that we want to help them memorize the Word of God because God says that will help to keep our children from sin. Those verses say, “How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word. With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments! Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” As we memorize the Word of God with our children, we learn together how to avoid sin.

A final key for helping our children grow in the knowledge of the Word of God is showing them how to meditate on the Word of God. Joshua 1:8 says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” As we help our children learn to understand how we meditate on the Word of God throughout the day, they will also be learning to meditate. Psalm 1:1-3 gives some great promises about the results of effective meditation when it says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow in the knowledge of Christ and His Word.

8.

The Biblical Foundation for Growth in Godly Character

In our last two topics we saw that Moses was given five priorities for spiritual leadership. Our last two topics have covered the first two of those priorities. As we provide spiritual leadership to our children we have seen that we are to pray for our children and we are to help them grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. Today we will see that our third priority as we lead both our physical and our spiritual children is to help them grow in godly character. Exodus 18:20 says, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” Notice that this verse says that we are to show them the way to walk.

There is a great difference between showing our children how to walk and telling our children what to do. That difference must be clearly understood if we are going to carry out our God given priority to show our children how to walk. Paul defined this difference very clearly in I Corinthians 4:14-17 where we read, “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.” These verses give us seven key principles to help us understand how to help our children develop godly character.

First, we see that a godly parent makes a clear distinction between shaming a child and warning a child. Paul made it clear that he did not want to put the Corinthians to shame. Instead he wanted to warn them. When we put a child to shame we cause them to turn in upon themselves. Such shame produces humiliation and dishonor. In contrast, a warning points out the fact that something is sinful and needs to be corrected. It also provides the opportunity to show a child how to correct the thing that the child has done wrong. There is a great difference between telling a child, “You are a bad child,” and telling a child that they thing that they have done is sin and they need to ask Christ for forgiveness. The first statement says that a child is bad or defective. The second reminds the child that he or she has committed a sin and needs to ask Christ for forgiveness.

Second, we see that a godly parent makes a clear distinction between an instructor and a father. The word that is translated “instructor” was used by Homer in his book *The Odyssey* to introduce Mentor, a slave who was given the responsibility for raising a son. The Greeks felt that the work of raising a child was not the work of a parent but just the work of a slave. The instructor usually focused on severe discipline to prepare the boy for manhood. In contrast in I Thessalonians 2:7-12 Paul makes it very clear that a godly parent shows the love of a nursing mother and the example of a godly father. To help our children develop godly character we must show genuine love and a godly example to our children and give them an example to follow instead of just punishing them with severe discipline.

Third, we see that Paul says that in Christ Jesus he had begotten them through the Gospel. In

addition to speaking of a physical child, the Jews used the word “begotten” to speak of bringing a person to his way of life or converting a person. Here we see that a godly parent helps a child develop a godly lifestyle by showing that child a way of life that models the transformation that the Gospel makes in the life of a person as that person is learning to follow the example of Christ. A child that consistently sees a life with a critical and judgmental spirit will develop a critical and judgmental spirit. A child that sees the love and compassion of Christ consistently modeled by a parent will be drawn to Christ and will learn to live a life of love and compassion.

Fourth, we see that a godly parent invites his children to imitate his example. We see in I Corinthians 11:1 that Paul said, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Here we see that Paul did more than just tell spiritual children to imitate him. He also pointed out the fact that he was imitating Christ and following the example of Christ. In order to imitate and follow the example of Christ, we must get to know Christ and not just know about Him. I John 1:3 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” We can know about Christ by reading the Bible. However, we will really only “know” Christ as we learn to enjoy daily fellowship with Him. This means learning to share our lives with Christ and living in His power instead of our own strength.

Fifth, we see that a godly parent helps children become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry. Paul said that he was sending Timothy, his faithful and beloved son in the Lord. At the same time Paul also makes it very clear that Timothy has become a full partner in ministry and that they ministered as a team. I Thessalonians 1:1 begins, “ Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Although Timothy had been a spiritual son to Paul, Paul helped the church at Thessalonica to recognize that he was now a full partner in ministry.

In doing this Paul was following the example of Christ. In John 15:15 Christ said, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Then Christ told Mary in John 20:17, “...go to My brethren and say to them, 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'” Here we see that Christ elevated His disciples from servants to friends and brethren. Just a few verses later Christ helped the disciples to understand what it meant to be friends and brethren. John 20:21 says, “So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Christ said He was sending them the same way that the Father sent Him.

In Galatians 4:1-2 Paul said, “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” Here we see that a father normally had a set time when he changed the status of his son from the status of a servant to the status of being master of all (a full partner with his father). One of the greatest problems in many cultures is the fact that many parents never allow their children to become “adult sons and daughters” but try to keep them in the role of servants under their authority.

People who are pressured to be under the authority of another person will often obey. However,

Godly adult sons and daughters will do much more. They will honor their parents because of respect when the parents change the status of their children to “adult sons and daughters” who are treated as partners and friends. This will produce a mutual respect because the parents will honor and respect their children as adults and accept counsel from their children just as their children accept counsel from them. Both the parents and children will then be able to put the words of Galatians 5:13 into practice when it 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.” Godly adult children have a unique relationship with godly parents. Both children and parents are able to enjoy true liberty and both are able to serve one another with mutual love and respect. This helps each adult child to reach their full potential in Christ.

Sixth, we see that a godly parent focuses on his ways. The word that is translated ways is used 102 times in the New Testament. It is used to speak of the way or the road that a traveler travels. It is also used to speak of a course of conduct including the way that a person thinks, feels and decides. Paul knew what Timothy would teach the Corinthians because he had observed the character and teaching of Timothy. He had listened to Timothy and knew how he thought. He had walked together with Timothy and understood the feelings of Timothy. He had observed how Timothy made decisions in his life. As a result, Paul knew that Timothy would model godly character for the Corinthians because that was what Timothy had done through the years as Paul and Timothy served the Lord together.

Seventh, a godly parent gives a consistent example that is the same in every situation. As we read I Corinthians 4:17, “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”, we see that Paul had provided an example for Timothy. Paul said that Timothy had observed that his life and godly character were a consistent pattern of life. He did not change in his character as he went to different cities. He did not do one in thing in one church and a different thing in the next church. His ways in Christ were the same whether other people were watching or not. Timothy had seen this consistency in the life of Paul and so was able to remind the people in Corinth of the way that Paul had lived as he ministered among the Corinthians.

As we see from these seven principles, godly character is caught rather than just being taught. Godly character will develop in the lives of our children as they see it modeled in our lives. True ministry to our children is the result of what we are when no one is watching except our children. They see how we relate to one another as a family and they imitate what they have seen. May the Lord richly bless you as you model godly character for both your physical and your spiritual children.

9.

The Biblical Foundation for Growth in Practical Skills

In our last three topics we have looked at three of the five priorities that were given to Moses to help him develop godly leadership so that he and these additional leaders could lead the people of Israel effectively. Parents should have these same five priorities as they help their physical and spiritual children develop. Today we will be looking at the fourth priority that Moses was given. Exodus 18:20 says, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” The fourth priority of Moses was to show the developing leaders the work that they must do or to put it another way, how they were to do the work of the Lord.

This is a very important priority in the development of our children. We want to show them how to do the work of the Lord. Many Christians tell others the work that they should do but they never show them how to do the work of the Lord. If we want to see our children learn to serve the Lord effectively as they grow and mature, then we must make it a high priority in our own lives to take the time to show them how to do the work of the Lord. In order to understand how to help our children learn to do the work of the Lord, we will look at the example of how Christ showed His disciples how to do the work of the Lord.

We help our children learn to serve the Lord by giving them the opportunity to observe how we serve the Lord. This is what happens as our children just spend time with us as we carry out the daily activities of our lives. Christ gave us the example by just inviting people to go with Him as He went to various places. In John 1 Christ invited two men to just spend the rest of the day with Him. John 1:39 says, “He said to them, “Come and see.” They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour).” In John 2 Christ invited his disciples to go with Him to a wedding in Cana. John 2:11 says, “This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him.” The disciples watched as Christ changed water to wine and it caused them to believe.

Later in John 2 Christ invited the disciples to go along with Him to the Passover in Jerusalem. They saw Christ cleanse the temple and John 2:17 says, “Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.” Here we see that the disciples observed what Christ did and it caused them to remember what the Old Testament said. In John 3 and 4 the disciples observed what Jesus did in Jerusalem and the surrounding area of Judea and later in Samaria. Just as the disciples learned best by observing what Christ did, our children learn best by observing what we do. In fact they will learn both from our good actions and also from our sinful actions.

A key thing to remember about teaching our children by example is that they will learn from what we do more than what we say. If we yell at our children, “I told you not to yell.” They have heard us say one thing and observed that we did the opposite thing. Our children have not learned from what we have said. However, our children have learned from what we have done. Because we yelled at them, they have learned that it is all right to yell at one another regardless of what we said. The result will be that they will continue to yell at others.

Children also observe what we do that is right. If we teach our children a verse like Ephesians 5:20, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” If they see that we also have an attitude of thankfulness, they will learn to become thankful. If we teach our children a verse like Ephesians 4:32, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you,” If we have a kind and forgiving attitude, they will learn to be kind and forgiving. They will learn to do what they see us practicing in our lives.

In Exodus 18:20 we see that we are to show them how to do the work of the Lord. They learn from our example the character that will make their ministry effective. Then they also need to learn from our example how to do the work of the Lord effectively. In Acts 20:20-21 Paul told the elders of Ephesus, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here we see that Paul took the elders with him and showed them both publicly and privately how to share the Gospel with both Jews and Gentiles.

Instead of just telling the elders what to do, Paul took them with him so that they could see how he shared the Gospel. In doing this, Paul was following the example that had first been shown by Christ. In Mark 1:17 Christ told some fishermen, “Then Jesus said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” This happened about a year after Christ began His public ministry. As a result, for the next two and a half years those men had the opportunity to see how Christ shared the Gospel with others.

The disciples learned from the example of Christ and they realized the importance of showing others how to share the Gospel. As a result, in Acts 10 we see that Peter took six men from Joppa with him when he went to share the Gospel at the house of Cornelius. While reporting this event to the church at Jerusalem, Peter said in Acts 11:12, “Then the Spirit told me to go with them, doubting nothing. Moreover these six brethren accompanied me, and we entered the man's house.” In the same way our children will learn to share the Gospel with others as we take them with us when we are sharing the Gospel with others.

Paul took Timothy and many others with him to show them how to develop ministry skills. Acts 16:2-3a says, “He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” Paul showed Timothy and others the whole process of planting churches from the beginning point of prayer through the process of reaching people for Christ, teaching them, training them by example and then sending them out to reproduce their lives in the lives of others.

Paul called Timothy his own son in the faith and also showed Timothy how to help churches. In fact when Paul sent Timothy to the church in Corinth he said in I Corinthians 4:17, “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.” Here we see that Timothy was a spiritual son that knew how to do and teach the same things that Paul did and taught. In the same way, as you show your own children how to do the work of the Lord, they will learn to do and teach the same things that you do and teach.

In addition to showing our children how to develop ministry skills, we also want to show them how to help others develop ministry skills. II Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.” Paul told Timothy to commit to faithful men the things that he had learned by observing the ministry of Paul and then participating with him in that ministry. Timothy was to teach people the Word of God, show them the way to walk and then show them how to serve the Lord by developing their ministry skills. He was to teach these things to faithful men.

From what Paul told Timothy we learn several things about how to help our children develop ministry skills. We see that part of the process of helping them develop ministry skills is helping them learn how to recognize godly character. Paul said to commit these things to faithful men. This means that we want to show our children how to recognize those who are faithful. First we must be an example of faithfulness ourselves. Then we want to show our children how to become faithful. Third we want them to be able to recognize when a person is faithful and when a person is not faithful. In the process of teaching our children how to recognize faithful people, we are actually helping them to grow in their faithfulness.

A second key we see in II Timothy 2:2 is that Paul told Timothy to commit the things that he had seen in Paul to others. The word that is translated “commit” means to teach, explain and entrust what you teach to another person so that the person can pass it on to others. Here we see that we are to teach our children so thoroughly that they can teach others. This would include the teaching of ministry skills. Our goal is to help our children learn how to develop the spiritual life and ministry of others. As they learn to develop others, they are learning how to teach their own children in the future.

We might summarize the process for helping our children learn ministry skills with the following steps:

You do while your child observes.

You do while your child participates.

Your child does while you observe.

Your child does that ministry on his own and reports back on what happened.

You do that ministry together to strengthen the ministry skills that your child is developing.

You send your child out to reproduce himself in the lives of others.

It is a great privilege to help both our physical and spiritual children develop ministry skills. May the Lord richly bless you as you multiply your ministry by helping your children learn to minister effectively.

10.

The Biblical Foundation for Growth in Ministry Multiplication

The last four topics have looked at four of the five priorities that were given to Moses to help him develop godly leadership. We have seen that all four of these priorities are also priorities for helping our physical and spiritual children. The same is true for the fifth priority given to Moses. To review these five priorities as they apply to our children, we are to:

Pray for our children

Help our children grow in knowledge

Help our children grow in godly character

Help our children grow in ministry skills

Share ministry with our children

Today we will focus on the fifth of these priorities as we look at Biblical principles about sharing ministry with our children.

In Exodus 18:21 Moses was told, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” Moses was told to share the ministry with qualified men. We are called to help our children become spiritually qualified and then share ministry with them so that they are being equipped for ministry throughout their lives. The verse begins by telling what character qualities Moses was to use as he developed and selected men to share the ministry. We need to develop these character qualities in our children if we want to see them develop an effective ministry as they mature.

First, Moses was told to select able men. The word that is translated “able” is used 244 times in the Old Testament. In Genesis 47:6 we read, “The land of Egypt is before you. Have your father and brothers dwell in the best of the land; let them dwell in the land of Goshen. And if you know any competent men among them, then make them chief herdsmen over my livestock.” Here we see that the word is translated competent to be the chief herdsman over the livestock of Pharaoh. This meant that this person was able to lead others. In Proverbs 31:10 the female form is used to speak of the virtuous wife, “Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies.” In these two verses we see that these are people that have become qualified to lead others because of their ability and character. We want to help our children develop the character and the ability to lead others.

Second, Moses was told to select men that feared God. This speaks of having a reverence for God. We also want to help our children develop a reverence for God. This will usually only happen as our children see that we have a reverence for God. As they observe our example, there are two key characteristics that we want to develop in their lives so that they will become adults that fear God. In John 4:24 Christ told the Samaritan woman, “God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” Then in Ephesians 4:15 we read, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” We help our children learn to fear God as we show them to speak the truth in love so that they develop spiritually and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

Third, Moses was told to select men of truth. Christ told how we develop people so that they speak the truth in John 8:31-32. Those verses say, “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Our children become people that are able to speak the truth as we show them by example the importance of abiding in the Word of God. As we help our children learn to abide in the Word of God by studying it with them, memorizing it with them, showing them how to meditate on the Word and helping them learn how to apply the Word of God to their lives; these verses tell us that the Word of God will also set them free.

This statement that the Word of God will set them free is a key to understand. Genesis 3:10 says, “So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” When Adam sinned he became controlled by fear, guilt and shame. Every person since Adam has been motivated by that same fear, guilt and shame. Christ wants to transform our children and sent them free from those original consequences of sin. Galatians 5:13 explains what this freedom will do for their lives when it 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.” As our children grow in their understanding of the liberty that they have in Christ, they will become individuals that are led by love instead of being individuals that are driven by fear.

Fourth, Moses was told to select men that hated covetousness. I Timothy 6:6-8 says, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” Here we see that we want to show our children how to be content with what the Lord has given them. Then I Timothy 6:9-10 says, “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Here we see that the desire for riches leads people to fall into temptation and a snare and those are things that we want our children to learn to avoid in their lives.

Fifth, Moses was to select people to be leaders of groups of various sizes. The basic unit for group leadership is ten as Moses was told to select leaders of tens, fifties, hundreds and thousands. One of the things that we want to show our children how to do is learn to lead a group of ten people. Then if we also show them how to develop each of those ten people so that they can learn to lead a group of ten we will multiply their ministry and service for the Lord.

A key principle for helping our children learn to lead a group of ten people is given in Mark 10:42-45 where we read, “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. “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” We help our children learn to become godly leaders by showing them how to become a slave to all.

A person who drives people will drive them until they can get out of the way. A person that leads

people can lead them as far as he himself has gone. A person who serves people can help them develop their full potential. As we show our children how to serve other people and help those people develop their full potential, we are equipping them to lead a team. Then in order to lead a team effectively, they need to understand their purpose in life.

We help our children develop a purpose in life as we show them how to put I Corinthians 10:31 into practice in their lives. That verse says, “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” As we help our children become focused on bringing glory to God in all that they do, the Lord is able to work in their lives and through their lives in a mighty way. We need to show our children that God is able to work in their lives and then through their lives. Then we need to help them to understand that the Lord wants to make their lives count for eternity.

Many parents push their children toward worldly success. We must choose to lead our children to build a loving relationship with Christ that will give them the power to impact the lives of others for eternity. A statement I often heard from my parents as a boy was, “Only one life will soon be past. Only what’s done for Christ will last.” Our desire as parents should be to realize that we can help our children learn to make their lives count for eternity.

Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Paul spoke these words after he gave five things that he prayed for the Christians in Ephesus. Paul prayed for the following five things for his spiritual children:

1. That they would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.
2. That Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith.
3. That they would be rooted and grounded in love.
4. That they would know the love of Christ that passes knowledge.
5. That they would be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul knew that as he regularly prayed for these things to become true in the lives of his spiritual children that the Lord would do great things in their lives and through their lives. In fact the Lord would do far more than they could ever imagine. That would happen because it would be the power of the Lord instead of their human strength that would be working in their lives. The result would be that they would also bring glory to Christ by what the Lord accomplished through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you pray for the spiritual growth of your children and show them how to develop and lead a team that can work together to serve the Lord.

11.

The Biblical Foundation for Training

Shortly before Christ returned to heaven, He gave us a commission to “Make Disciples” of all nations. The very first place that we should make disciples is in our own homes as we show our children how to become disciples of Christ. Christ gave the Biblical definition of a disciple is give in Matthew 13:52 where we read, “Then He said to them, “Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” The word that is translated “instructed” in this verse is the word that is translated make disciples in Matthew 28:19-20.

As parents it should be our goal to help our children become disciples of the kingdom of God. This verse gives us several characteristics of a disciple. First, we see that a disciple is one that has become a householder or the head of a spiritual household. Second, a disciple has a treasure. That treasure is the Word of God and the life that he has in Christ. Third, a disciple is able to bring things out of that treasure or teach what he knows to others. Fourth, a disciple brings out of that treasure things that are new – he or she has a learner’s attitude so that he or she is learning new things from the Word of God. Fifth, a disciple brings out of that treasure things that are old – he or she is able to teach others the basics of Christianity.

Here we see that the goal of training our children is to equip them to become “adult sons” and “adult daughters” that have become partners in ministry. That means that we are partners and can learn from them as they learn from us. One of the greatest blessings of my life was when my father asked me to show him how to teach evangelistic Bible studies so that he could have a ministry of evangelism to other adults during the final years of his life.

This brings us to the question, Is there a Biblical process for developing our children and helping them become disciples? The answer to that question is **YES**. Christ demonstrated that process by the way that He developed His disciples and equipped them for ministry. In fact Christ demonstrated that He had completed that process and helped His disciples become adult spiritual sons and partners in ministry when He said to them in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” We will help our children become disciples of Christ as we follow the same process that Christ followed in making His disciples. That process could be called “Four Calls and a Commission”. We will see today how that process applies to our children.

In John 1:38 two men asked Christ where He was staying. He invited those men to come and see. Over the next few months Christ invited many other people to just come and spend time with Him. His goal during that first stage was to evangelize. (Reach) For that first year Christ just took these people along with Him so that they could observe His life. This is the same way that we reach our children for Christ. As they are growing up in their lives, we take them along with us and spend time with them so that they can see our love and our example. As they observe that we are led by the love of Christ instead of being driven by the fear of man, the Lord will use our love to draw them to Himself. While we are leading them by love we are also providing an example for them to follow.

We may not realize it but our children are observing our lives very carefully as they grow and mature. This is best seen if we will observe them while they are playing during their early years. Carefully notice how they talk to one another when they are playing house and you will know how they hear you when you talk to them. In I Thessalonians 1:7-12 Paul, Silas and Timothy told how they had helped new Christians grow. They give us an example of what we want our children to observe as they grow. In verses 7-9 those men said that they had provided the love of a nursing mother. Then in verses 10-12 they said that they had provided the example of a godly father. In the same way, our children will learn from our love and example as they observe us.

After those men had followed Christ for a year and observed His example, Christ said to some of them in Matthew 4:18-22, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." This began the second stage of Christ's ministry to His disciples. His goal during this second stage was to edify (Teach). For the next nine months Christ showed the disciples how to explain to others the message of repentance and faith. Matthew 4:23 says, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people." During that nine month period Christ had the disciples participate as well as observe.

Once our children become Christians we also want to begin showing them how to share the Gospel with their friends. We encourage them to start praying together with us for their friends that are not Christians. We help them memorize the verses that we use as we share the Gospel. We have them quote the verses that they are learning as we share the Gospel with their friends. We help them learn as we share the Gospel with their friends. We help them learn by taking them with us as we share the Gospel with others. The focus of this period is teaching them how to pray for others and what to say as we help them begin to participate with us as we minister to their friends.

After His disciples had followed Christ for about 21 months, Mark 3:13-14 says, "And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach." Here we see that Christ began the third stage of ministry to His disciples. During this stage the goal of Christ was to equip (Train). In Mark 6:7-13 Christ sent out the twelve for a period of time in teams of two to share the Gospel with others. Then in Mark 6:30-31 the disciples returned to Christ and reported what they had done and what they had taught. Later in Luke 10 Christ sent out a total of seventy of His disciples to share His message with others. Luke 10:17-19 tells how they reported what they had done and taught when they returned. During this stage Christ had the disciples do and report while He observed. Then they continued to do ministry together.

In the same way, we begin encouraging our children to share the Gospel and minister to others when we are not with them. As they tell us what happened as they shared and ministered, we encourage them by rejoicing with them about the way that the Lord is using them as they share with others the things that they have learned. Then we continue doing ministry with them so that they can learn to minister in other ways as we show them how to help their friends that have become Christians begin to grow. Our goal is to help our children learn to serve the Lord by showing them how to serve Him in all of the different ways that we serve Him.

After His resurrection, Christ told the disciples in John 20:21, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” This brings us to stage four where Christ expanded the leadership (Mobilize). Then in John 21:15-17 Christ told Peter and the other disciples Feed My sheep and shepherd My sheep. Here we see that the disciples had now become full partners in ministry with Christ. Over the previous three and a half years Christ had shown them how to minister in every way that He had ministered. He had given them opportunities to participate. He had sent them out and then report what they had done and taught. He had ministered together with them after they returned to help them continue to learn. He had promised to send the Holy Spirit to give them power to serve.

In the same way we continue to help our children grow and develop their ministry so that they grow and mature both spiritually and physically. Our goal is to help them become equipped for effective ministry by the time that they become adults. We help them understand that they were given the Holy Spirit at the time of their salvation and help them understand that as they yield to the Holy Spirit that He will give them the power for effective ministry. We also recognize them as “adult sons and daughters” by sending them forth to serve the Lord just as the Lord sent us. We help them realize that they are now full partners in ministry in the work of the Lord.

Finally after giving the disciples these four calls and showing the disciples how to do effective ministry, Christ gave them a commission. This is the fifth stage of ministry as Christ sent them out to extend His ministry (Send). Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.” Just as Christ had helped them become disciples, He now sent them out to repeat the process and Make Disciples by showing others the things that Christ had shown them, teaching others the things that Christ had taught them, giving others opportunities to do what they had learned and then report on what they had done and then inviting them to become full partners in ministry, we are to do the same things with our children.

We are to help our children develop a vision of the way that the Lord can use them as they go and make disciples. We help them to realize that this is best done as they first show others how to become Christians. Then they teach others as they minister with them as they give others the opportunity to participate with them. We help our children realize the importance of giving on-the-job training to those that they teach and rejoice with them as they report back what they have done. Finally we help our children learn to help others become “adult sons and daughters” that are full partners in ministry and then commission them to make disciples also. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children become partners in the ministry of the Lord.

12.

The Biblical Foundation for Ministry as a Family

One of the great privileges of the Christian life is to learn to minister together as a family. There is nothing more rewarding to us as parents than to have the privilege of seeing our children faithfully serving the Lord because as parents we ministered with our children as they were growing and we equipped them for faithful and effective ministry. We will look at some key Biblical principles that will make it possible for us to minister as a family and equip our children for effective ministry.

When Paul made his second visit to the churches in the area of Derbe and Lystra, we read about one of the young men that Paul invited to become a part of his ministry team. Acts 16:1-3a says, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him.” Here we see that as a young man Timothy was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Iconium. Since these cities were about forty miles apart, this meant that Timothy already had an effective ministry in the whole region where he grew up and lived. That happened because he came from a family where there was an effective ministry as a family.

In writing to Timothy, Paul said in II Timothy 1:5, “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.” Here we see that Timothy was a man with a genuine faith. The word that is translated “genuine” is translated without hypocrisy in James 3:17. In I Peter 1:22 the word is translated a “sincere” love of the brethren. Timothy had a faith that was genuine and sincere and without any hypocrisy. This brings us to the question, how did that genuine faith develop in his life? The answer to that question is what helps us to understand what provides a foundation for ministry as a family.

In II Timothy 1:5 mentioned above we see a little about the family in which Timothy grew and developed as a boy. His mother and grandmother were both what we would call Old Testament saints. They were true followers of the Lord before they ever learned about the death and resurrection of Christ. As true Old Testament believers, they understood the message of the Old Testament well enough to prepare themselves and Timothy to immediately accept Christ when the Gospel was presented to them. That probably happened when Paul and Barnabas made their first trip to this area recorded in Acts 14.

II Timothy 3:14-15 tell how Lois and Eunice prepared Timothy so that they were all ready to accept the message about Christ as soon as they heard of His death and resurrection. Those verses say, “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 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 had carried on a faithful ministry as a family by teaching Timothy the Word of God from his birth. The word that is translated “child” is the same word that is translated “newborn babes” in I Peter 2:2 and is also used to speak of Christ at His birth in Luke 2.

That early training plus the teaching that the family received when they heard about the death and resurrection of Christ prepared Timothy to become a mature man of God. II Timothy 3:16-17 goes on to say, “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.” Timothy had become a mature man of God because of the faithful teaching of his mother and grandmother. That maturity had also produced an effective ministry by Timothy because he had been equipped for every good work.

That was the reason why Timothy had the good report of the brethren in Lystra and Iconium even though those cities were about 40 miles apart. Lois and Eunice had both taught Timothy the Word of God and had shown him how to effectively serve the Lord in the entire region surrounding the area where the family lived. (As I was growing up, my parents put thousands of miles on our cars as we traveled as a family to serve the Lord. My father had a small farm and sometimes the cows got milked at 3 in the afternoon so that we could minister as a family and other times at 10 at night after we got home from ministering as a family. That may not have been good for the cows but it did help us as children to learn to serve the Lord as we were growing up. When my brother, sister and I reached driving age, our parents gave us freedom to take the car to minister in the entire surrounding area. Once I got my drivers license I taught a weekly Bible study on the Lummi Reservation and a Sunday school class in Canada while still in high school.)

As one of those who had become a spiritual son of Paul as a young adult, Timothy continued to carry on and expand the ministry that he had developed before he started traveling with Paul. Paul gave some key instructions that carried on the teaching that Timothy had received from his mother and grandmother. Those instructions help us to see five key things that we want to develop in our children as we minister as a family to equip them to serve the Lord throughout their lives.

First, I Timothy 4:12 says, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” The first way that we develop our children for effective ministry as a family is to help them develop and become an example. This verse mentions six areas where we want to develop their example. The key to helping them become godly examples to others in these six areas is to be godly examples to our children in these six areas so that we can say to our children as Paul said in I Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” We will never succeed in this area by just telling our children to be an example. Instead we must provide our own lives as an example and invite them to imitate us.

Second, I Timothy 4:13 says, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” Here we see that we teach our children by giving them opportunities to gain experience in the reading and explaining of Scripture. As Timothy was growing up, he was given opportunities to read the Scripture publicly in the synagogue. As he continued to grow he was also given opportunities to explain and teach the Word of God. As a result, Paul told him to keep on doing what he had been doing from the time that he was growing up as a boy.

Third, I Timothy 4:14 says, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.” Here we see that we help our children develop an effective ministry by helping them learn how to use their spiritual gift or gifts to serve

others. I Peter 4:10-11 tells how we help our children develop their spiritual gifts. Those verses say, “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” If our child has a speaking gift, we show that child how to share the Word of God. If our child has a serving gift, we show that child how to serve the Lord with the ability that God supplies.

Fourth, I Timothy 4:15 says, “Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all.” As we help our children to think about the example their lives provide, the opportunities that the Lord gives to share the Word of God and the proper exercise of their spiritual gifts, we also want them to learn to ask the Lord what purpose He has for their lives. Every child needs to develop a spiritual purpose for his or her life so that their life has focus and purpose. As we help our children develop focus and purpose for their lives, this verse says that their progress will become evident to all.

Fifth, I Timothy 4:16 says, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” Helping our children learn to take heed to yourself means to help them regularly examine their life so that they make sure that they are walking to please the Lord in all that they do. This means helping them learn to walk in the Spirit – Galatians 5:16; learn to be led by the Spirit – Galatians 5:18; and live in the Spirit – Galatians 5:25; so that their lives bear the fruit of the Spirit – Galatians 5:22-23. As they are learning to do these things, our children will learn to walk in the true Christian liberty.

That Christian liberty is described in Galatians 5:13 where we read, “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 the true purpose of liberty or freedom in the Christian life is to provide the opportunity to learn to serve one another in love. This gives us a clear focus as we help our children to grow and mature in Christ so that they will have an effective ministry throughout their lives. We want to help them learn to enjoy the liberty that they have in Christ. That means we want to help them learn as a part of their growth to learn how to serve one another in love. That is why it is so important that we minister as a family so that we can show our children by our example as we serve others in love. The Lord will greatly use our example in the lives of our children and grandchildren to equip them to serve the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to serve others in love.