



Helping our Children Develop Fellowship with Christ

**Growing Godly Families Series
Manual 4**

by

Duane L. Anderson

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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.

Fellowship Develops as we Walk in the Light

Today we are beginning a new series of topics on how to help our physical and spiritual children develop fellowship with Christ. As people become Christians they have become children of God. This means that they have established a relationship with God but many have never been shown how to develop fellowship with the Father and Christ. This can even happen with our own physical children or our spiritual children unless we show them how to develop their fellowship with the Father and Christ. That will be the focus of this series of topics.

In I John 1:3-4 we read, “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. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” In these verses we see that fellowship is necessary in order to experience great joy in our lives. John was experiencing fellowship with the Father and with Christ but he realized that his spiritual children to whom he was writing this letter were not experiencing that same fellowship. As a result, we see many principles in the book of I John to learn how to help our children learn to enjoy that fellowship.

I John 1:5-7 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” First, we must help our children understand the fact that God is light in order to have fellowship with the Father and with Christ. In John 8:12 Christ said, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” Unless our children understand that God is light and that Christ is the light of the world they will not understand how to have fellowship with God.

Second, we want to help our children learn that Christ will always get rid of the darkness. One way to illustrate this to our children is to turn off the light so that the room becomes dark. Then turn on the light and help our children realize that the light will always get rid of the darkness. Since Christ gives us spiritual light, His light will always get rid of spiritual darkness. As I John 1:5 says, “...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” We want to help our children realize that when we are sharing our life with Christ that we will be in the light because Christ gets rid of the darkness because there is no darkness in Him at all.

Third, we want to help our children learn the difference between walking in the light and walking in darkness. In Luke 22:31-32 Christ said to Peter, “And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.” Then Christ told Peter that Peter was going to deny him three times that very night. Peter answered that he would never deny Christ. When Christ was arrested a few hours later Luke 22:54-55 tell us, “Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together,

Peter sat among them.” Instead of walking with Christ to the trial, Peter followed at a distance so that he could stay in the shadows.

Then Peter sat down in the light of the fire of those who were against Christ. We might say that he chose the wrong light. He chose the physical light instead of the spiritual light. Since he was now sitting in the physical light provided by the enemies of Christ, he was not prepared when the questions and statements started to come to him. As a result, over the next few hours Peter denied Christ three times. The same thing will happen to us and to our children if we are walking in the false light of the world. In contrast, Christ promised that the one who follows Him will not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.” Peter was following but at a distance and he denied Christ.

In contrast, Peter had been as bold as a lion a few hours earlier when he was standing next to Christ. John 18:10-11 says, “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" At this moment Peter was standing next to Christ and so he had great boldness. (Christ even took time to protect Peter from future trouble by healing the ear of the servant so that there was no evidence that Peter was guilty of assault with a deadly weapon.) The lesson that we do see is that to have true fellowship with Christ we must choose to follow Christ closely and not follow him at a great distance.

Fourth, we want to help our children learn that once they become Christians that they must choose whether they are going to walk in the light or walk in darkness. Christ illustrated the fact that we must make a choice. Matthew 7:24-27 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Our children can hear the teachings of Christ. However, this passage shows that they must both hear and choose to obey the sayings of Christ in order to walk in the light.

Christ also used John to give a warning about the danger of self deception. I John 1:6 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” If people continue to walk in darkness they are not experiencing fellowship with Christ. Instead they are lying to themselves and deceiving themselves. We help our children learn to choose to walk in the light as we give them an example through our own lives by our own choices. Our children are the first to recognize when we are walking in darkness for even a short time as Peter did. Since our children see what we do when no one else is around, they know if we really live what we teach. Unless we walk the walk, our children will not listen to us when we talk the talk. Our actions and our words must agree.

Paul also warned the Christians in Corinth of this danger of self deception. In I Corinthians 3:1-3 we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and

divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” The Corinthians were behaving like people that were not even Christians. As a result, their lives were filled with envy, strife and divisions.

In the next chapter Paul encouraged the Corinthians to begin imitating his life. In I Corinthians 4:15-17 he said, “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.” Even though Paul could not be with his spiritual children at that moment, he said that he had sent Timothy to remind them of his ways (the way that they had seen Paul walk) when he was present with them.

Paul repeated this request to the Corinthians when he said in I Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” This verse also reminds us how we help our physical and spiritual children learn to make the choice to walk in the light. We provide them with an example to follow and then encourage them to follow our example just as we follow the example of Christ. We show our children how to walk in the light as we provide an example by walking in the light ourselves.

Fifth, as we show our children how to walk in the light of Christ, we will show them by our example how to have fellowship with other Christians. I John 1:7 says, “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.” Walking in the light with Christ causes us to also walk in fellowship with all other Christians that are walking in the light with Christ. As a result, we show our children how to share their lives with other Christians as they share their lives with Christ. Christ never taught Christians to live their Christian life in isolation. Instead Christ chose the twelve so that they could learn to live their lives in relationship with one another.

As we take our physical and spiritual children with us when we are sharing our lives with other Christians, they will be learning how to share their lives with other Christians. As I John 1:7 says, we have fellowship with one another when we are walking in the light. We have fellowship with our children as we take them with us while we are fellowshiping with other Christians. We also help them learn how to have fellowship with others from our example. At the same time they are having the opportunity to begin to develop fellowship with these other Christians because they are already beginning to share their lives as they spend time together with us while we are sharing our lives with other Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children develop fellowship with other Christians as they walk in the light.

2.

Fellowship Develops as we Experience Forgiveness and Cleansing

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in fellowship with the Father and with Christ as they walk in the light. Today we are going to see how to show our children the way that this fellowship with the Father and the Son develops as we experience forgiveness and cleansing. Many Christians are Christians for years before they finally realize that Christ paid the penalty for all of their sins. Sometimes Christians continue to live with guilt in their lives because no one has taken the time to help them understand the meaning of forgiveness and cleansing. That will be our focus of our topic today.

In I John 1:8 we read, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Most Christians realize that they continue to sin after they become Christians even though there are a few who deceive themselves and think that they no longer sin. This verse speaks to those who deceive themselves. However, it is also a reminder that we do continue to sin after we become Christians. The fact that Christians do continue to sin causes many to live with great guilt unless they understand what the Bible teaches about forgiveness and cleansing.

That is why 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.” One of our goals as we help our physical and spiritual children in their spiritual growth should be to help them learn how to understand and explain to others how to experience both forgiveness and cleansing from sin. We want to help them understand five things Christ did for them at the moment of salvation. Acts 26:18 says that Christ does the following five things for every person at the moment of salvation. That verse says, “To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.” Here we see that at the moment of salvation Christ:

1. Opened our eyes
2. Turned us from darkness to light
3. Turned us from the power of Satan to God
4. Caused us to receive forgiveness of sins
5. Caused us to received an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ

The fourth thing that Christ did was He caused us to receive forgiveness of sins. The word forgiveness means to let go, to send away or to give up a debt. We want to help our children understand that at the moment that we placed our trust in Christ, He let go of all of our sins: those we committed in the past; those we commit today; and those that we will commit in the future. I Peter 2:24 tells us, “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.” Every sin that we ever committed or will commit was placed on Christ as He hung on the cross. The penalty for our sin was paid that day on the cross.

Because Christ paid the penalty for our sin, II Corinthians 5:21 says, “For He made Him who knew

no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” This verse explains what happens at the moment we repent of our sin of unbelief and place our faith in the fact that Christ paid the penalty for our sin on the cross. At that moment that we repent, God forgives our sin and sends our sin away from us. However, the Father does a second thing for us at that moment. II Corinthians 5:17 said a few verses earlier, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” Because we are now in Christ, verse 21 says that the Father has placed the righteousness of Christ on us. This means that as the Father looks at us He sees the righteousness of Christ instead of our sin.

However, as Christians we still continue to commit sins. That is why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children understand I John 1:8-2:2. I John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” We have already seen that I John 1:8 tells us that we deceive ourselves when we say that we no longer sin. That is why I John 2:1-2 tells us what happens when we do sin again. We see that when we sin again that Christ acts as our Advocate or defense attorney.

These verses give us a picture of a courtroom. In Revelation 12:10 we see that Satan is the accuser of the brethren. In I John 2:1-2 we see that the Father is the Judge and Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney. When I sin, Satan accuses me of sin to the Father because he is the accuser of the brethren. After Satan accuses me, Christ immediately speaks as my Advocate or defense attorney. Christ says that He paid for my sin and that I accepted His payment by repenting of my sin. We must help our children understand the meaning of the word propitiation in order for them to fully understand what happens next. The word propitiation means “that which satisfies”. As a result, when Christ says that He paid for my sin and that I accepted the payment by repenting of my sin, the Father says, “I am satisfied with the payment. Case dismissed.” We became the children of God at the moment of salvation and Satan can never destroy that relationship.

We also want to help our children understand that the sin that people must repent of in order to become the children of God is the sin of unbelief. John 16:8-11 shows us that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces unbelievers of three things. Those verses say, “And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” The Holy Spirit convicts those who are not Christians of their sin of unbelief. He convinces them that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One that could pay the penalty for their sin. He convinces them of the fact that Satan was already judged at the cross and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment. As our children learn to understand these verses, they learn how to work with the Holy Spirit as they share the Gospel with others.

We also want to help our children understand so they can explain to others what God does with our sins at the moment of salvation. We see that God:

1. Removed our transgressions as far as the east is from the west – Psalm 103:12 (aren’t you glad that He did not say as far as the north is from the south)
2. Cast all of our sins into the depths of the sea – Micah 7:19

3. Promised He will remember our sins and lawless deeds no more – Hebrews 10:17

4. Blotted out our sins at the moment we repented – Acts 3:19

One of the other things that happened at the moment of salvation is the fact that God renewed our conscience. Our conscience now immediately convicts us as Christians when we commit sin. However, the purpose of convicting us of sin is not to cause us to have to live with continual guilt. Instead our conscience is renewed so that we are very aware of the fact that we are committing sins so that we can confess those sins. As we confess our sins moment by moment we are able to have a good or clear conscience. Hebrews 13:18 says, “Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.” Once we have placed our trust in Christ we have a desire to please God by living honorably. We have that good conscience because we do confess our sins.

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.” We have already seen that our sins are forgiven and that is what established the relationship so that we are the children of God. However, we also need to experience the cleansing so that we can enjoy moment by moment fellowship with God. Hebrews 9:14 explains, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” The blood of Jesus Christ paid the penalty for our sins so that we experienced forgiveness at the moment of salvation. In addition we see in I John 1:9 that the blood continues to cleanse us so that we are able to experience moment by moment fellowship with the Lord.

We also learn two things about the character of the Father from I John 1:9. First we see that God is faithful to forgive and cleanse us. This means that regardless of how many times we sin after we become a Christian that God will always cleanse us because He has already forgiven us. Second, we see that God is just to forgive and cleanse us. The reason why the Father is just when He forgives us is due to the fact that our sin was paid for by Christ and the Father is satisfied with that payment as we saw earlier. In order for God to be just, the penalty for sin had to be paid. However, as we saw earlier the Father was satisfied by the payment that Christ made by shedding His blood. As a result, the Father is just when He forgives and cleanses sin because the penalty for that sin has already been paid in full by Christ.

It is a great privilege to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to explain to others that they can enjoy fellowship with the Father and with Christ because of the fact that Christ provided the payment both for their forgiveness and for their cleansing. As each Christian confesses his or her sin, that person can know the joy of fellowship because their conscience is being cleansed as they confess their sins. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to help others experience fellowship with Christ and with the Father.

3.

Learning to Walk in the Light and Love

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in fellowship with the Father and with Christ as they learn to understand that God wants them to experience cleansing of their conscience by confession of their sins. Today we are going to discuss how we can help our children learn to explain to new Christians how they can walk in the light and learn to walk in love toward others. Many Christians are Christians for years before someone shows them how to walk in the light. As a result, such Christians also fail to learn how to walk in love toward others. These things will be the focus of our topic today.

In I John 2:3-6 we read, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” To help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the light and then help others learn to walk in the light we see that these verses give four principles.

First, obedience to Christ is evidence that we know Christ. We see that John reminds us as we begin these verses that the way that we get rid of doubts about our salvation is by obedience to the commands of Christ. If we really get to know Christ, then we will choose to obey His commandments. This means that we want to show our children how to help others know Christ and not just know about Him. In Philippians 3:10-11 Paul wrote, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.” Here we see that the desire of Paul was to get to know Christ better each day. Paul realized that really getting to know Christ included three things:

1. Knowing the power of His resurrection
2. Knowing the fellowship of His sufferings
3. Becoming conformable to His death

We begin to understand the power of His resurrection as we learn to yield our lives to Him so that He can work through our lives. This results in us learning to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” We begin to understand the fellowship of His sufferings as we learn to live godly lives. II Timothy 3:12 says, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” We are becoming conformed to His death as our purpose in life is to live for Christ. Philippians 1:21 says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” As we are learning to live for Christ, we are learning to die to self.

Second, obedience requires more than just words. Many people say that they really know Christ but they do not obey Him. John says that such people are liars and that the truth is not in them. In Romans 7:14-25 we see that Christians can have the desire to obey but do not have the power to

obey. Romans 7:19-20 gives a summary of what happens when we depend on our own strength when it says, "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me." In contrast, Philippians 4:13 says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Here we see that when we choose to depend on Christ instead of our own strength that He can do all things through our lives.

Third, obedience develops our love to maturity. We saw above that in Galatians 5:16 we are encouraged to walk in the Spirit. Then Galatians 5:18 says, "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." Ephesians 5:18 says, "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit." As we walk in the Spirit, are led by the Spirit and are filled with the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23 says that our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. Those verses say, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." That is why I John 2:5 tells us, "But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him." Christ perfects His love in our lives and brings that love to maturity as we walk in the light.

Fourth, obedience will cause us to follow the example of Christ. I John 2:6 tells us, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. The night before His crucifixion Christ washed the feet of the disciples. When He had finished He said in John 13:15-17, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." As our love matures, we want to walk in the same way that Christ walked.

In addition to helping our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the light by being obedient, we also want to help them learn to walk in love toward others. I John 2:7-11 says, "Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." Christ said that we learn to walk in love as we practice obedience in our lives.

First, John points out that we have an old commandment. He tells us that the old commandment is the Word that we have had from the beginning or the Old Testament. Christ summarized the entire Old Testament when He said in Matthew 22:37-40, "Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Here we see that the old commandment is summarized by loving God with our whole heart, soul and mind and loving our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Second, John points out in these verses that we have a new commandment. Christ repeated that new commandment three times in John 13:34-35; John 15:12; and John 15:17 as He ate the Last Supper with the disciples. John 15:12 says, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." Christ says that walking in the light will make it possible to love as He loved instead of walking in the darkness of hatred. In recent years many Christian books have been written about the family. Nearly all of these books focus on love in the family. However, nearly all of these books focus on family love rather than Christ's love. Here we are commanded to love one another as Christ has loved us. We show our children how to love with Christ's love as we practice the one anothers that are mentioned in the New Testament. There are 31 positive one anothers that we are to practice and 12 one anothers that we are to avoid.

Third, John points out that we will abide in the light as we love our brother. In fact he says that we will not even stumble when we are walking in the light. Many people have tried to help Christians learn to walk in the light by encouraging them to ask themselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" That is a good question but there is another question that is even more important. That question is, "What would I do if Jesus were physically walking beside me right now?" The reason why this is the more important question is that Christ actually dwells within us. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." If our lives are pure, the light of Christ will shine out through our lives.

We are warned to avoid two things. First, we are warned not to grieve the Spirit. Ephesians 4:30-32 says, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you." We grieve the Spirit when we allow sin to remain in our lives. We let others experience the kindness and love of Christ as we yield the control of our lives to Him.

Second, we are warned not to quench the Spirit. In I Thessalonians 5:16-22 we read, "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil." The word quench is used when we put out a fire. We quench the fire of the Holy Spirit when we are disobedient Christians. Happiness depend on what is going on around us. Joy depends on what is happening within us. Here we see that as we are walking in the light of Christ that we will be enjoying fellowship with Christ. This fellowship will fill us with joy regardless of what is going on around us. We will be talking with the Lord about various things throughout the day. We will have a thankful attitude. We will test all things and hold to the things that are good and avoid the things that are evil. As we do these things the light of Christ and the love of Christ will be seen in our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to walk in the light so that their lives learn demonstrate the love of Christ.

4.

Learning to Grow to Spiritual Maturity

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the light so that the life of Christ in them matures and flows out through their lives. This only happens more and more in our lives as we grow to spiritual maturity. Today we want to focus on how we help our physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity and learn how to help others grow to spiritual maturity.

In I John 2:12-14 we read, “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, Because you are strong, and the Word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.” We want to show our physical and spiritual children how to grow to spiritual maturity and then learn to help others grow to spiritual maturity.

Spiritual growth begins at the moment of spiritual birth. I Peter 2:2 says, “As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Here we see that a person that has just put his or her trust in Christ needs the things that are the milk of the Word to help that person grow. Since new Christians do not know what parts of the Bible are like milk, they need a spiritual parent to help them begin to understand the basics and to help them experience healthy spiritual growth.

If people do not have a spiritual parent to help them in their spiritual growth, they remain like a spiritual toddler (a child that cannot speak clearly). Without someone to help them in their spiritual growth, many people that become Christians remain as spiritual toddlers for many years. There are four key passages on spiritual toddlers – I Corinthians 3:1-3; I Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14. Those four passages give us ten characteristics that are common in spiritual toddlers. These are:

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

This list of characteristics of a spiritual toddler shows why it is so important for us to walk alongside both our physical children and spiritual children to help them grow and mature. Then we

want to show them how to walk alongside others and act as a spiritual parent to help others learn to grow to spiritual maturity. In our verses here in I John 2:12-14 we see several key things that we help our physical and spiritual children learn and practice in their own lives so that they can show others how to mature.

In these verses we see two characteristics of a growing spiritual child. These are things that we want to show how to help our children develop in others through their example and teaching.

Those characteristics are:

1. He knows that his sins are forgiven.
2. He knows the Father.

Most new Christians hope that their sins are forgiven but they do not know that their sins are forgiven. A Christian really begins to grow when he or she really understands how to experience forgiveness and cleansing and what that means in their daily lives. Many new Christians must have this explained many times before they fully understand. This may take even longer for people that grew up in a church where they were taught that they can lose their salvation. New Christians need a person that will patiently explain to them passages like Romans 8:35-39, Romans 10:9-13, John 10:27-30 and many other similar passages.

Growing Christians also need to understand what God does with their sins at the moment of salvation. The following passages tell us some of the things that Christ does with our sins at the moment of salvation. Psalm 103:12 says, "As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us." Micah 7:19 says, "He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." Then Hebrews 10:17 says, "Then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." We help a Christian to really start growing as we help them to understand that their sins have not only been paid for but they have also been removed. When John the Baptist introduced Christ in John 1:29 he said, "...Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" New Christians grow best when they no longer continue to feel guilt about past sins.

Then growing Christians need help in learning to get to know the Father and not just know about the Father. This happens best as they spend time with other Christians and hear them really pray and talk to God rather than just repeating memorized prayers. Paul gave some specifics that he prayed for growing Christians in Ephesians 3:17-19 where he prayed, "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." Growing Christians get to know the Father as they hear other Christians share their concerns with the Father.

God gives us three characteristics of a spiritual young man or young woman in these verses in I John 2:12-14. Those characteristics are:

1. He is strong in spirit (compare Luke 1:80 and Luke 2:40).
2. He has the Word of God abiding in Him.
3. He has overcome the wicked one.

We become strong in spirit as we learn to yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit so that the Holy

Spirit can work through our lives. Romans 6:16 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” The Holy Spirit gives our human spirit the strength to obey and practice righteousness at all those times that we are yielding to Him.

Christians that have the Word of God abiding in them spend time hearing, reading, studying, memorizing and meditating on the Word of God so that when people ask them questions they are equipped to follow the instructions of I Peter 3:15, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” In their conversations with others they often share principles from the Word of God.

Christians that have overcome the wicked one are not perfect because I John 1:10 says that if we say that we have no sin that we deceive ourselves. However, it does mean that they have learned to walk in love instead of fear. 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.” As we help our physical and spiritual children to learn to walk in love, they will be led by the love of Christ instead of being driven by the fear of people. Because they are walking in love, they have grown to understand the meaning of I John 4:4 where we read, “You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” As a result they are also walking by faith.

In these verses we have one characteristic given of spiritual fathers or mothers. These are Christians that have become mature Christians because as I John 2:14a says, “I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning...” This speaks of a Christian that has really learned to share his or her life with the Lord. There are also several other characteristics of a spiritual parent:

1. He has one or more spiritual children that he or she loves. I Corinthians 4:14-17 says, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Just as Paul was a spiritual parent to Timothy, Titus and others, a spiritual parent has developed a similar relationship with a spiritual family.
2. He shows the care of a nursing mother – I Thessalonians 2:7-9. Here we see that a spiritual parent to a new Christian provides the same kind of care that a physical parent provides to a physical child.
3. He provides the example of a godly father – I Thessalonians 2:10-12.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children grow to maturity so that they can help others learn to grow. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to become mature reproducing Christians.

5.

Changing our Love for the World

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow to spiritual maturity and become reproducing Christians. This only happens as we walk alongside them as they go through the process of spiritual growth. Today we want to focus on how we can help our physical and spiritual children learn to have a life of victory as they learn how to recognize the different ways that Satan tempts them.

In I John 2:15-17 we read, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 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. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” In these verses we see that we are not to love the world. II Corinthians 10:3-5 explains what is meant by the world when it says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” In these verses we see that the world is everything that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. We are not to love any thing that exalts itself against God.

We see that we cannot have two masters. Matthew 6:24 says, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The word that is translated mammon is used four times in the New Testament, the other three times are all in Luke 16:9-13. In those verses we read, “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when you fail, they may receive you into an everlasting home. He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” The Lord makes it very clear that we cannot serve both God and the riches of this world.

Every person must make a choice and we must ask ourselves this question, “Are the temporary riches of this world more important to me or are the eternal riches of heaven more important to me?” Those who choose the temporary riches of this world are making the choice to serve this world instead of serving God. That is why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children realize that this is a choice that everyone must make so that they can have the right priorities in their own lives and help others learn that they must choose what will be the priority in their lives. Each person must choose to love and serve the Father or love and serve the world. We cannot choose both.

Satan knows that there are three key ways that he can tempt people with the things of the world. I

John 2:16 says, “For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” Genesis 3:6 shows that Adam and Eve were tempted in all three of these ways. That verse says, “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.” Since this verse says that Adam was with Eve at the moment she took the fruit, both of them were tempted in the same way because he did not stop her from taking the fruit and in fact joined her in eating the fruit.

Adam and Eve saw that the fruit was good for food – the lust of the flesh. They saw that it was pleasant to the eyes – the lust of the eyes. They saw that it was a tree desirable to make one wise – the pride of life. Matthew 4:1-11 shows that Christ resisted temptation by quoting the Word of God when Satan tried to tempt Him with the same three forms of temptation. When Satan tempted Christ with the lust of the flesh by suggesting He turn stones into bread, Christ answered in Matthew 4:4, “But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" When Satan tempted Christ with the pride of life by suggesting that he jump off of the pinnacle of the temple, Christ answered in Matthew 4:7, “Jesus said to him, "It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" When Satan tempted Christ with the lust of the eyes by showing Him all of the kingdoms of the world, Christ answered in Matthew 4:10, “Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.'”

We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Satan will try to use these same three ways to tempt them to seek the temporary things of the world. Satan will try to get them to satisfy the desires of their body - with things that are certainly very temporary. He will try to get them to desire the things that they see – the things we see will not last. He will try to tempt them to seek the praise of men (pride) – get them to focus on their fifteen minutes of glory which is very temporary.

As we show our children by our own values that we see the temporary nature of these things, then we can help them learn how to have victory over temptation. I Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” First, we want to help them realize that they are likely to fall for those things that are temporary if they depend on their own strength. Second, we want to help them realize that the Lord is faithful and makes a way of escape so that we can have victory over the temptation to seek these temporary things.

Then we need to help our children understand some of the ways that Christ provides as a way of escape for us. The first of these things is advance preparation to prepare them for the times when temptation will come. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!” Scripture memorization is one thing that prepares us to recognize temptation when it comes. We help our children learn to memorize scripture by memorizing Scriptures with them.

Then II Timothy 2:22-24 gives us four more things Christ tells us to do to have victory over

temptation when we are tempted. Those verses say, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient.” When temptation comes we are to:

1. Flee from youthful lusts.
 2. Follow or pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.
 3. Keep our hearts pure before the Lord.
 4. Avoid arguments and quarrels as they show pride but solve nothing.
- As we model these things by our actions, our children are being shown some of the ways that Christ provides as ways to escape when we are tempted.

Since I John 2:17 says, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”, we want to help our children learn the things that are the will of God and then show them how to carry out that will. Some things God clearly tells us that they are His will. For example, I Thessalonians 4:3 says, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.” We want to help them memorize all the verses that tell us something is the will of God.

Then we also want them to understand that the commandments of God tell us the will of God. Matthew 22:37-40 says, “Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” Then John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The commandments in Matthew summarize the entire Old Testament and the command in John summarizes the entire New Testament.

That means that in order to help our physical and spiritual children learn to carry out the will of God that we must show them how to love God by our example. Since Christ defines our neighbor as any person or stranger, that means that we show our children how to obey this command by taking them with us and showing them how to share the Gospel with those who do not know Christ. Since we are to love other Christians as Christ has loved us, we show our children how to love other Christians by our example as we practice the “one anothers” of Scripture in all of our relationships with other Christians. The only way our physical and spiritual children will learn how to do things like accept one another is as we provide an example for them to follow. Love for the Lord, for neighbors and for one another is most effectively taught through example because love is caught not taught. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to carry out the will of God.

6.

Learning to Recognize the Truth

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to change their love for the world so that they learn to love God. Then they will have a great desire to carry out the will of Father instead of being tempted by the temporary pleasures of the world. Today we want to focus on how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the truth. Only as they learn to recognize the truth will they be able to practice and teach the truth.

In I John 2:18-20 we read, “Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Here we see that one of the things that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize is the characteristics of false teachers so that they will not be deceived by them.

Since this is the first time that the word Antichrist is used, we need to understand who the Antichrist is. This is the proper name used of the coming world ruler that will rule the world during the tribulation. He will oppose and seek to replace Christ in the minds of people. Other descriptions of this Antichrist are given in I Thessalonians 2:1-12, Matthew 24:15, Daniel 8:9-11, Daniel 11:31-38 and Daniel 12:11. John used the word antichrist all five times that it is used in the Bible. Three times John used this title to refer to the Antichrist and we will see the other two times in our topic today.

As you notice, two of those five uses are I John 2:18 quoted above. John warned that the future Antichrist is coming but also said that there are also many antichrists in the world today. These antichrists are false teachers who have the same goal as the future antichrist. Their goal is to oppose and seek to replace Christ in the minds of people. Paul warned of such false teachers while talking to the elders of the church at Ephesus. In Acts 20:29-30 Paul warned them of two types of false teachers. Those verses say, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” One type of these false teachers is described as savage wolves that come in and try to destroy the flock. These are false teachers that are outside the church. These false teachers try to destroy Christians.

However, the second type of false teachers is false teachers who are inside the church. Paul describes them in verse 30. We see three characteristics of such false teachers:

They rise up from within the church.

They speak perverse things.

They seek to draw away disciples after themselves.

This second group of false teachers is false teachers who try to deceive Christians and lead them

astray. These are actually much more dangerous because they arise from within the church. As a result, we see that these are false teachers who claim to be Christians and seek to lead weak Christians astray. Ephesians 4:14 says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Here we see that such false teachers seek to deceive weak Christians with false doctrines. They seek to lead them astray by trickery and cunning craftiness because of their deceitful plotting.

In addition to arising from within the church, the second characteristic of false teachers is that they speak perverse things. This means that these false teachers seek to corrupt, to pervert and turn people from the right path. Twice this word is used to describe Elymas, the sorcerer in Acts 13:8-10. His goal was to prevent Sergius Paulus from hearing the Word of God. Instead Paul dealt with the perverse things that Elymas was trying to teach and Sergius Paulus believed and put his trust in Christ. Paul tells us how to live in the middle of a perverse generation in Philippians 2:14-16 where we read, “Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Here we see that we are to show our physical and spiritual children how to hold fast to the Word of life.

The third characteristic of false teachers is that they seek to draw away disciples after themselves. II Timothy 4:3-4 describes them as teachers having itching ears when those verses say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” Here we see that false teachers will usually be very entertaining and tell people in the church what they want to hear instead of what they need to hear. The previous verse, II Timothy 4:2, told Timothy what to do and how to respond to such false teachers when that verse says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” We want to help our children understand that true believers need to hear the Word of God so that they are not deceived by such false teachers.

Helping our physical and spiritual children learn how to help newer or weaker Christians recognize the truth involves two things. First, as we have seen, we show them how and help them learn to recognize those who are false teachers. As they help weaker Christians begin to recognize false teachers, this prevents newer and weaker Christians from being deceived by false teachers. As I John 4:3 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.” That is one part of our ministry as we help our children and is preventive to protect them. The second is the positive. We want to help them learn to recognize true teaching.

I John 2:20 says, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Here we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to help newer or weaker Christians understand the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 Christ told the disciples the night before He was crucified, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said

to you.” Here we see that each Christian has the Holy Spirit living in his or her life to help each Christian understand the things that Christ taught and help each Christian to remember those teachings when questions or false teachings arise.

Later that same evening Christ explained to the disciples how to work with the Holy Spirit in evangelism. John 16:8-11 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; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit convicts and convinces the unbelievers of their sin of unbelief as we share the Scripture with them. The Holy Spirit convinces the unbelievers that Jesus Christ is the Righteous One that could pay the penalty for sin as we share Scriptures about Christ. Third, the Holy Spirit convinces the unbelievers that when Christ rose from the dead that Satan had been judged and that those who continue to follow Satan will share in his judgment as we share Scriptures about the resurrection of Christ.

Christ immediately followed these verses by saying in John 16:13, “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” Here we see that Christ again promised that the Holy Spirit would guide believers into all truth. As we take our physical and spiritual children with us as we share the Gospel with their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances, we have the opportunity to pray with our children and ask the Lord to guide us to the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit wants to use to convict the unbeliever of the sin of unbelief, the fact that Christ is the Righteous One and the fact that if the unbeliever continues to follow Satan that the unbeliever will share in the judgment of Satan.

However, we want to show our children that the Holy Spirit does more than just give them the Scriptures to share with those who are not Christians. We also want to show them that the Holy Spirit helps them grow as Christians and learn how to teach other Christians. In I Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” We want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit helps us know the things that are freely given to us by God.

Second, we want them to know how to teach this truth to others. These verses tell us that we help them learn to do this by asking the Holy Spirit to teach them how to explain Scripture with Scripture. Christ often quoted the Old Testament to explain other Scriptures and to explain His teachings. We want to help our children become so familiar with the Word of God that the Holy Spirit can help them learn to explain Scripture with Scripture. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to recognize the truth and share the truth of the Word of God with others.

7.

Learning to Depend on the Spirit as we Speak

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize and explain the truth to newer and weaker Christians. As our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the Word of God to others, we also want to help them learn the importance of depending on the Holy Spirit as they speak with others. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In I John 2:20 we read, “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.” Then I John 2:27 adds, “But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.” In these verses we see that every Christian has been given an anointing by Christ. Christ explained what is meant by this anointing to John and the other disciples the night before He was crucified. John 14:16-18 says, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” Christ wanted the disciples to know that He was not going to leave them alone when He returned to heaven. Christ wanted the disciples to know that the Father would send the Holy Spirit to continue to teach them (and us).

In the context of I John 2:20 and 27 mentioned above we see that one of the things that the Holy Spirit teaches Christians is to recognize false teachings and false teachers. This is important because already at the time that John wrote I John there were many false teachers. John pointed out in I John 2:22 that one of the things that false teachers often deny is that Jesus is the Christ. John makes it clear in the following verses that those who do not have Christ do not have the Father either. However, John also knew that false teachers would teach other false teachings. That is why he wanted these young Christians to know that they can depend on the Holy Spirit to help them recognize those teachings that are false. As we depend on the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will help us to recognize false teachings.

False teachers cannot explain the Word of God accurately because I Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” As a result, false teachers promise liberty to others while at the same time they are in bondage themselves. II Peter 2:19 says, “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage.” This is why it is important to help newer Christians depend on the Holy Spirit to help them recognize false teachers so that they will not be brought into bondage.

However, the Father also sent the Holy Spirit to help us learn the truth so that we can teach the truth to others. Christ said in John 14:26, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to

you.” We see from this verse that one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit to us is to teach us all things and bring to our remembrance the things that Christ taught. A little while later Christ said in John 16:13 that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth. As a result, the ministry of the Holy Spirit helps us both to recognize false teachings and to help us learn how to explain the truth to others. These things will both happen as we learn to depend on the Holy Spirit.

This is why it is so important to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to learn how to explain the things that Christ taught. In I Peter 3:15 we read, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” According to this verse we are to help every Christian become equipped to explain the hope that we have in Christ. This is to be done with a gentle spirit and with godly reverence. As a result, we need to help our children learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to know what to teach and also to know how to teach with a gentle spirit and godly fear.

In I Corinthians 2:9-10 we read, “But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him." But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” Here we see that as we learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to help us understand the Word of God that the Spirit will give us understanding of the things of God because God has prepared those things for those who love Him. Then I Corinthians 2:12 promises, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” God wants us to know and understand the things that He has freely given to us and so He gave us the Holy Spirit to give us understanding.

However, that understanding is not just for our own knowledge. That understanding is given to us so that we will be able to teach others. The next verse, I Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Here we see that we are to speak the things that we have learned. However, we are not to speak those things through the use of our human wisdom. Instead we are to teach the way that the Holy Spirit teaches us. We see that He teaches us by comparing spiritual things with spiritual. This happens as the Holy Spirit brings other passages of Scripture to our mind to help us understand the passage that we are studying. In the same way, we want to help our children learn to explain Scripture from Scripture instead of using their own opinions.

We see that Christ gave us two examples of how to use Scripture to explain Scripture in Luke 24. In Luke 24:27 as Christ talked to the two on the road to Emmaus we read, “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” We see the impact that it had on the two when we read in Luke 24:32, “And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?” Explaining what happened with Scripture had such an impact that the two immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell the others what they had learned.

After the two told the other disciples what Christ had taught them, Christ appeared and spoke to all of the disciples that were gathered there. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which

were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me." And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures." Here we see that Christ used the Scriptures to explain to the disciples all that had happened and to give them understanding so that they could comprehend what the Scriptures taught.

Then after helping the disciples to understand and comprehend what the Scriptures taught, Christ told them how to apply what they had learned by teaching others through the power of the Holy Spirit. Luke 24:46-49, "Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Christ told the disciples how to teach and apply what He had just explained to them. However, Christ also pointed out the fact that they needed to wait to begin teaching until they could depend on the Holy Spirit to give them the power to teach effectively.

In the same way we also need to depend on the Holy Spirit to give us the power and wisdom to teach effectively. In II Timothy 2:24-25 we see the attitudes that we are to have as we teach the Word of God. Those verses say, "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." Here we see that as we yield our human spirit to the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit will give us the strength to teach with the following attitudes:

1. We will not argue as we teach.
2. We will be gentle as we teach.
3. We will be able to teach in the power of the Spirit.
4. We will be patient as we teach.
5. We will correct false ideas with humility.
6. We will be praying that God will grant repentance to those who oppose.
7. We will help people to know the truth (because we compare Scripture with Scripture).

As we show our physical and spiritual children how to depend on the Holy Spirit to understand the Word of God and then show them the attitudes that will make them effective as they share the Word of God with others, the Lord will work mightily through their lives. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." The Lord wants to do more than we can even image through our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how you depend on the Holy Spirit to share the Word of God effectively.

8.

Learning to Live a Pure Life

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to depend on the Holy Spirit to know what to speak and how to speak. We saw that as they depend on the Holy Spirit that the Holy Spirit will teach them how to explain Scripture with Scripture and that the Holy Spirit will help them to develop the attitudes that will make them effective as they teach. Today we want to help them learn to live a pure life so that people will see that they are applying what they teach to their own lives. Showing them how to live a pure life will be the focus of our topic today.

In I John 2:28-3:3 we read, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” I John 2:28-29 teaches us how to live a pure life. Then I John 3:1-3 explains why we want to live a pure life as Christians.

In order to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to live a pure life, we see several key principles in the verses quoted above. In I John 2:28 we see that we are to show our children how to do two things in the present that will prepare them for the future. First, we are to help them recognize their relationship with Christ. As John wrote this book, he spoke several times to remind us that we are children of God. John also said the same thing in John 1:12-13 where we read, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We want to help our children understand that when they repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ that they became the children of God. This was not a physical birth. This was not a birth based on their own will. This was a birth that was based on the will of God.

Second, I John 2:28 says that once they become children that they are to abide in Christ. John explained what it means to abide in Christ in much more detail in John 15. In that passage we see the results of abiding in Christ:

We bear fruit – verse 2

We allow God to take away (prune) the sin in our life – verse 2

We will only bear fruit as we abide in Christ – verses 4-5

We have answered prayer as we abide in Christ – verse 7

We glorify the Father as we bear much fruit – verse 8

We become disciples that bear much fruit – verse 8

We abide in the love of the Father and Son – verses 9-10

We love one another as we abide in Christ – verses 12, 17

We are recognized as friends as we abide in Christ – verse 15

We know the plans of Christ as we abide in Him – verse 15

I John 2:28 also tells us that there we will be two results in the future as we abide in Christ. We will have confidence at the coming of Christ. We will not be ashamed at the coming of Christ.

In I John 2:29 we see that we are to help our children learn to practice righteousness. This will happen as we help our children to understand that Christ is the Righteous One. We show then that Christ is the One who gives us the power to live a righteous life. We help them to understand that Christ tells us that a righteous life is clear evidence of the fact that spiritual birth has happened in their lives. Two key verses that help our children understand how Christ gives us the power to live a righteous life are Romans 6:13 and 6:16 where we read, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God...Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” In these verses we see that we are to present ourselves to God and then yield our lives to Him. At all times that we are yielding our lives to the Lord, He will give us His strength to do what is right.

As we look at the verses quoted above from I John 3 we see why we want to live a pure life. In I John 3:1 we read, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.” In this verse we see that God has shown his great love to us. This means that God has made each Christian a special object of His love. That is why God made us His children and a part of His family. This also explains why the world cannot really understand us as Christians. Because of the sin nature every person without Christ has a natural desire to do those things that are sin. Their lives are controlled by the fear, guilt and shame that came into the world as soon as Adam and Eve sinned.

In contrast, as Christians we have been given a new nature that has a desire to please God. We want to do the things that are right. Even when we depend on our own strength and sin, we still have a desire to do what is right. Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” In our own strength we will yield to sin even though we have a desire to do what is right. This is why God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we have the power to do what is right.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned 19 times in Romans 8. Romans 8:28-29 says, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Then Romans 8:35-39 concludes that chapter by saying, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Here we see that we are assured that the love of God is causing Him to give us the power to become more and more like Christ as we yield to Him.

In addition to wanting to live a pure life because of the love God has shown to us, we also want to live a pure life because God is helping us to become like Him. I John 3:2 says, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” In this verse we see five things. We are reminded that we are the children of God. We see that we cannot understand what we will be like in the future. We see that God has not yet revealed what we will be like. We see that we will be like Him. Finally, we will see Him as He is. Since God is helping us to become like Him, that gives us a desire to become more like Him during the time that we are living on this earth.

We show our children how the love of Christ has changed the motivation of our life so that we want to become more and more like Christ while we live on this earth. We help them to understand II Corinthians 5:14-15 where we read, “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 grow in our understanding of His love by taking root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and taking root in the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19), we grow in our desire to live for Him instead of living for ourselves. This gives us purpose in life because we realize that the things that we do can have an eternal impact.

In I John 3:3 we see a third reason why we want to live a pure life. We read, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” We were given the promise in the previous verse that we will be like Christ when we see Him. Here we see that we want to purify ourselves so that we become more and more like Him now as we live on this earth. Then we can wait eagerly for the coming of Christ and not have fear in our lives. The day that Christ takes us to heaven will be a day of victory. That is why I Corinthians 15:57-58 says, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Here we see that our desire is to be ready to meet Christ when He comes because we are doing the things that He prepared us to do.

We want both ourselves and our physical and spiritual children to be able to say with Paul in II Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children prepare for the day when they will see Christ face to face.

9.

Learning to Become More Like Christ

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to live a pure life. First we saw how to have a pure life and then we saw why we want to have a pure life. We also saw that when we placed our trust in Christ that we were given a new nature that had a desire to do what is right. Today we are going to build on that topic as we learn to show our physical and spiritual children how to grow in purity and learn to become more like Christ.

In I John 3:4-6 we read, “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.” In these verses we are given a short definition of sin when we are told, “Sin is lawlessness”. We could expand this definition by saying that, “Sin is self-will and rebellion against the person and law of God.” We also see the reason why Christ came to this earth. We see that He came to take away sin. It was possible for Christ to take away sin because He was without sin.

Then we see that verse six gives us two choices in the way that we respond to the fact that Christ came to take away sin. First, we see that if we are abiding in Christ that we do not want to practice sin. In contrast, we see that if we continue to want to practice sin that fact reveals that we have not seen Christ and have not known Christ. This is something that is important for every new Christian to begin to understand. That is why we want to help our children learn to understand what this means so that they can explain it to others and help new Christians in their growth.

This does not mean that a Christian does not sin any longer. As we studied chapter one, I John 1:8 said, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” We see that we still sin as Christians. However, we have a desire to do what is right because we are abiding in Christ. That is why Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Here we see that we sin as Christians when we depend on our own strength and yield to sin. That is why Romans 6:13 says, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.” We want to show our children how to help others understand what it means to present themselves to God.

Romans 12:1-2 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 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.” In the Old Testament the priests presented the sacrifices of the people to the Lord by offering them as sacrifices on the altar. Now as Christians we are all priests of God according to I Peter 2:5 and 9 and Revelation 1:6. However, we no longer offer animal sacrifices because Christ was the sacrifice for our sin. Instead we present our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord by yielding our bodies to the Lord.

However these verses show us that it is possible for Christians to still be conformed to the world even though they have presented their bodies to God. Verse two says that we are only transformed by the renewing of our minds. At the time that a person becomes a Christian that person has thought like the world from birth until the time of spiritual rebirth. If a person is 20 years old when that person becomes a Christian, that person has conformed his thinking to the world for 20 years. That is why we want to show our children how to learn to think and act Biblically instead of continuing to be conformed to the world and experiencing Romans 7:14-25 which is summarized by the words of Romans 7:24 where we read, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” A person that becomes a Christian but is not shown how to think and act Biblically is a very miserable person. That person has a desire to practice righteousness but does not know how to practice righteousness.

First, a person must learn to think Biblically in order to become more like Christ. Psalm 1:1-3 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.” Here we see the way to learn to avoid walking in the way of the ungodly is to learn to meditate on the Word of God day and night. That way the growing Christian can apply Biblical principles to more and more of the situations that he faces in his daily life. That means every new Christian must be shown how to meditate on the Word of God.

Psalm 119:130 says, “The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.” People receive the Word in several ways. They hear others read and explain the Word. They read the Word of God. We show them how to study the Word. In order for new and growing Christians to be able to meditate on the Word of God, one of the key things that we do is help them learn to memorize the Word of God. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!” One very helpful way to help new Christians learn to memorize is to work as a team memorizing verses. We can set the example by memorizing verses with others and also encouraging our children to learn verses along with new Christians.

Meditation on the Word of God becomes possible when we have the Word of God in our thoughts and in our hearts. Then with the various situations that we face throughout the day we are able to ask ourselves the question, “What Biblical principles apply in this situation?” As we think through the verses that we know from the Word of God, the Lord gives us His insight about how to handle those different situations. That is possible because we are learning to think Biblically instead of having our minds conformed to the thinking of the world. Psalm 119:97-100 says, “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts.” These verses show us that meditating on the Word of God gives us more wisdom and understanding than our enemies, our teachers and even the ancients.

Second, meditation on the Word of God is also a key in the transformation of our actions as well as our thoughts. 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.” Here we see that when the Word of God is in our meditation and thinking that then we know what to do. As we yield to the Lord, He gives us the power to carry out the things that we know from the Word of God.

That is why Psalm 1:3 gave the following promises about the results of meditation on the Word of God. That verse says, “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.” In these verses we see four characteristics of a Christian that has learned to think Biblically and yield to the Lord so that the Lord gives that person the strength to act Biblically. First, a tree planted by the river develops strong roots because it is well watered. We develop strong spiritual roots. Second, we will be fruitful in our Christian lives. Third, we will not have up and down periods like leaves that are withering. Fourth, the Lord promises that He will cause our ministry to prosper in each thing that we do to serve the Lord.

The reason why learning to think and act Biblically has such a powerful impact in our lives is clearly seen in Isaiah 55:8-9 where we read, “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” The thoughts of God are far beyond our thoughts. The ways of the Lord are far beyond our ways. As we think the thoughts of God and pray that He will give us the strength to carry out those thought by our actions, our lives will have a powerful impact on the world around us. This will happen because we are yielding our lives to the Lord so that He can work through our lives.

The Lord tells us what He will do through the life of any Christian that takes root in His love and acts in His strength instead of their own strength 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.” That is why John encourages us when He said in I John 3:7. “Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.” Christ is the Righteous One. He is the One that can give both we and our children His power to practice righteousness in our lives. As we help our physical and spiritual children learn to practice these things in their lives and then help new Christians learn to do the same, we will see the Lord multiply the ministry of our physical and spiritual children. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children for such a ministry.

10.

Learning Why the World Hates

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to become more like Christ. We saw that we help our physical and spiritual children become more like Christ as they learn to think and act Biblically instead of continuing to remain conformed to the world. However, learning to become more like Christ will often cause the world around us to react to us. We will see that as we learn why the world hates. Our focus in this topic will be how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to recognize and accept the hatred of the world.

In John 8:44 Christ told the Jewish religious leaders, “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.” In this verse we see three key characteristics of Satan. We see that he was a murderer from the beginning. He does not stand in the truth. He is a liar and the father of lies. Christ told the Jewish religious leaders that they were like their father and so they did what Satan did. In the same way, we need to help our children understand the character of Satan and help them realize that those who follow Satan will show the characteristics of Satan. That is why I John 3:10 tells us, “In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.” The person following Satan cannot show the love of Christ in his or her life.

In contrast, I John 3:11 says, “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” Here we see that one of the characteristics of a person that is following Christ is that the person will show the love of Christ to others. However, we realize that we cannot show that love in our own strength. When we depend on our own strength we will act out of fear. That is why most new Christians are still acting out of fear most of the time. 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.” However, as we grow and mature in Christ, His love is being brought to maturity in our lives. As a result, we are no longer driven by the fear of man. Instead we are learning to be led by the love of Christ. It is that love that Christ showed to His disciples and to us and commanded us to show to others. The world cannot understand the love of Christ.

First, they cannot understand the love of Christ because their father is filled with hate. This was shown clear back with the first children in the world. Cain was very religious. We see that he even brought an offering to the Lord. Cain was a gardener and brought some of the fruit of his crops to the Lord. Here we see that he was depending on his own efforts to try and please God. Even though he brought an offering to the Lord, his heart was controlled by sin. He was following his father the devil. This is explained so well for us in I John 3:12 where we read, “Not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous.” Cain could not love as Christ loved because he was following his father, the devil.

Second, they cannot understand the love of Christ because their father does not stand in the truth. Earlier in John 8:32 Christ had told the people gathered around Him, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” The Jews immediately replied in John 8:33, “They answered Him, 'We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can you say, 'You will be made free?'" Here we see that the Jews thought that they were free and had never been in bondage to anyone. However, Hebrews 2:14-15 tells us to whom they were in bondage. Those verses say, “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.” Here we see that all people who are not Christians are in bondage to the devil and he is controlling their lives by fear.

Christ explained the only way that any person can be set free from that bondage in John 8:36 where we read, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” Only Christ can set people free from the bondage of sin and the fear of death. That is why we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that Christ has given them liberty and set them free from that bondage. Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” The book of Galatians clearly shows us that those who try to live their Christian lives by keeping the law have placed themselves under a new form of bondage. That is why Galatians 5:13 tells us, “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 Christians we have been set free from the bondage of fear so that we are free to serve one another in love.

Third, they cannot understand the love of Christ because their father is a liar and the father of lies. In the previous paragraph we see one of the examples of the fact that the devil is a liar. He leads false teachers to lie to Christians and try to get them to try and grow in their spiritual lives by keeping the law. Ephesians 4:14 tells us that immature Christians are easily deceived by such false teachers. That verse says, “That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” Here we see that Satan uses lies to try and cause Christians to remain as spiritual toddlers. In I Corinthians 3:1-3, I Corinthians 13:11, here in Ephesians 4:14 and then in Hebrews 5:11-14 we see ten characteristics of spiritual toddlers who have been deceived by the lies of the devil.

However, with people that are not Christians, Satan controls their lives with the three characteristics of Satan mentioned above. As a result, we see that it is in the heart of those who do not know Christ to hate Christ. Christ told the disciples in John 15:18-19, “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” This is why it is essential that we help new Christians understand that there will be people that will oppose them. They are just following their father, the devil. We need to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Christ and not take that hatred personally because the world will hate us when they hate Christ.

It was for this very reason that Christ prepared the disciples to expect opposition and hatred. However, He also prepared them to respond to that hatred with love. In Matthew 5:43 Christ reminded people what the world taught. That verse says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" Christ said to those who chose to follow Him that we are to respond in a very different way. Matthew 5:44 says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." Here we see that as we learn to be led by the love of Christ that we will respond in four ways to those who hate us because they are controlled by the devil. We will love our enemies. We will bless those who curse us. We will do good to those who hate us. We will pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us.

Peter also taught us how to respond when people hate us and do evil to us. I Peter 2:20-24 says, "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed." In these verses we see that Peter encourages us to follow the example of Christ when we suffer for Him because of the hatred of the world toward Christ. We also want to help our children learn to follow the example of Christ when those who hate make them suffer for Christ.

John said in I John 3:13-15 after talking about Cain, "Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him." In these verses John points out the fact that we should not be surprised when the world hates us. We want to help our children realize that the reason that the world hates us is due to the fact that they are following their father, the devil.

In contrast, we want to give our physical and spiritual children an example by our own lives of how to follow the new commandment of Christ. In John 13:34-35 we read, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." We want to show our children how to enjoy the liberty that Christ has given them by learning to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:16-25 says this will happen as we show them how to walk in the Spirit, by led by the Spirit and learn to live in the Spirit. Then their lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to respond to the hatred of the world with the love of Christ.

11.

Learning to Show Love by our Actions

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn why the world hates. We saw that the world hates because the people of the world are following their father, the devil. We saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to respond to the hatred of the world with the love of Christ. Today we want to learn how to show our physical and spiritual children how to show love by actions and not just words. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In I John 3:16-18 we read, “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” In these verses we see that we learn some key principles that will help us show our physical and spiritual children how to show love by their actions.

First, we see that to help our children show love they first have to understand how to know genuine love. Today the primary use of the word “love” by the world is often used to describe lust or sex. Many people in the world do not even understand family love. However, even many Christians do not understand the kind of love that John is talking about here and so they define love as family love. In recent years several books by Christian authors have defined five ways that people feel loved. That may describe family love but it does not describe the kind of love mentioned in I John.

Christ said that the way we help our children to know the meaning of godly love is to help them understand the fact that Christ laid down His life for us. In John 10:11 we read, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.” Then John 10:15 says, “As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.” John 10:17-18 says, “Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.” The word that is translated “give” in verse eleven is the same word that is translated “lay down” in verses fifteen, seventeen and eighteen. As a result, we see that Christ showed His love for us by laying down His life for us. Of course we know that He did this by His death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. Christ showed His love by willingly laying down His life for us.

Second, we see that to help our children show love they need to see our example of what it means to lay down our lives for the brethren. In John 15:12-14 we read, “This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” In these verses we see that Christ modeled what it meant to lay down His life by dying on the cross. He also said that we are His friends if we do what He commands us. Since His commandment is to love one another as Christ has loved us, we see that we are also to lay down our lives for other Christians.

Christ became our sacrifice by dying for us. However, Romans 12:1 says, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Here we see that we model for our children what it means to be a living sacrifice instead of a dead sacrifice. We do this as we follow the example of Paul. In I Thessalonians 2:7-9 we read, "But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God." Paul said that like a nursing mother he made his schedule fit the schedule of these new Christians to help them in their spiritual growth. Then in I Thessalonians 2:10-12 he said that he also provided the example of a godly father. We model what it means to lay down our lives by doing whatever it takes to help our physical and spiritual children grow to spiritual maturity.

Third, we see that to help our children show love that we need to help them learn to see needs. These needs may be either spiritual or physical needs. Christ showed His disciples how to see spiritual needs in John 4. The disciples went into the town of Sychar and only saw food. The Samaritan woman went into the same town a short time later and brought a whole group of people with spiritual needs to Christ. In between, Christ told the disciples in John 4:35, "Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" In John 6 Christ showed His disciples how to recognize physical needs. In John 6:5-6 we read, "Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?'" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do." Christ was planning to meet a physical need but He first wanted the disciples to see that need.

Fourth, we see that to help our children learn to show love we show them how to open up their hearts to meet the needs that they see. In I John 3:17 we read, "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" If the love of Christ is controlling our own lives, we will show our children how to meet spiritual and physical needs by our own example as we take our children with us when we are meeting needs. Then after they have seen us meet physical or spiritual needs, we explain to them that the love of Christ is what gives us a desire to meet the spiritual and physical needs of others.

I John 3:18 says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Here we see that love is not just talk. Some people talk about how much they love Christ and how much they love other people. However, they never do anything to show that love. Here we see that we show that love in two different ways. We want to help our children learn to show love in both of these ways.

First, we see that we want to help our children learn to show love by their deeds or actions. In I Corinthians 13:4-8a we have the definition of love. The first part of verse four describes what love is when it says, "Love is patient and is kind..." We are given an example of the meaning of patience in James 5:7-8 where we read, "Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the

Lord is at hand.” In these two verses we see that the farmer shows patience as he waits from the time a crop is planted until it is ready to harvest before he gathers the fruit. In the same way we want to show our children by our example that we are patient as we wait for the coming of the Lord.

In addition to being patient in the way that we carry out our actions toward others, we also want to show our children by our example how to be kind as we carry out our actions toward others. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Christ demonstrated what kindness meant when He said in Matthew 11:28-30, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” The word that is translated easy in Matthew 11:30 is the same word translated kind in Ephesians 4:32. A yoke was used to team two oxen together to pull a load. Christ is saying that He teams up with us to help us learn from Him. We model this for our children as we show kindness as we team up with them in ministry.

Second, we see that we want to help our children learn to show love by speaking the truth. Ephesians 4:15 says, “But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ—.” We show our physical and spiritual children how to speak truth by sharing the Word of God when we speak instead of our own opinions. As they see us answer the questions of others from the Word of God, they learn to answer others from the Word of God instead of giving their opinions. In the process we want to show them how to share the Word of God with love and compassion both by their words and by their actions.

Truth and love must always go together. John 4:23-24 says, “But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” We will speak the truth in love if our human spirit is motivated by the love of Christ. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “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.” True worship of God means that our spirit will be motivated by the love of Christ and we will speak the Word of God instead of our own opinions so that we will speak the truth in love.

Christ calls us to help our physical and spiritual children learn to show the love of Christ by our example. That will happen as we help them learn to speak the truth of the Word of God motivated by the love of God in their hearts. May the Lord richly bless you as you show you physical and spiritual children how to show love by their actions.

12.

Learning to Enjoy a Clear Conscience

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to show love by our actions. We saw that our physical and spiritual children will only learn to show love by their actions as we give them an example to follow. That will happen as we help them learn to speak the truth of the Word of God motivated by the love of God in their hearts. Today we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to enjoy a clear conscience.

In I John 3:18 we see that we are to show love by our actions and not just by our words. Then in I John 3:19-21 we read, “And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him. For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” Here we see that when we are showing the love of Christ by our actions that it causes us to be persuaded in our hearts that we are Christians. This is very important for all Christians and especially new Christians because Satan works hard to cause Christians to doubt their salvation.

That is why it is important to help our physical and spiritual children learn 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 adds, “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.” As we help our children take root in Christ and His love, they become led by the love of Christ instead of being driven by the fear of man.

One thing that helps a Christian to grow spiritually is to have the assurance of his or her salvation. Many people have grown up in families where they experienced conditional love based on whether they were doing right or doing wrong at a particular moment. Such people usually felt that they were never good enough to be fully accepted by their parents. As a result, when such people become Christians they seldom understand that Christ has accepted them fully and recognizes that as Christians they will not live a life with no sin. In fact I John 1:8 says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Here we see that the only person that thinks a Christian can live a sinless life is a deceived person.

In contrast, we see here in I John 3:18-19 that as our lives show the love of Christ is in us that we know that we are of the truth. Even when we fail to show the love of Christ by our actions at times, we still have assurance in our hearts because we are motivated by the love of Christ instead of fear. Hebrews 2:14-15 tell us, “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 we repented of our sin of unbelief and accepted Christ by faith, He filled us with His love and released us from the fear of death.

In order to help Christians that have grown up in families where there was conditional love, we need to help them understand that their salvation is based on the fact that the Father is satisfied with the payment of Christ for their sin. I John 2:1-2 says, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” The word “propitiation” means that which satisfies. Every time Satan accuses us before the Father, Christ as our Advocate (defense attorney) says that He paid for our sin and we accepted His payment by placing our faith in Him. The Father answers, “I am satisfied with the payment. Case dismissed. We also need to help such individuals understand passages like Romans 8:35-39, John 10:27-30 and many others. The Lord uses such passages to assure the hearts of believers of their salvation and security in Christ.

However, as I John 3:20 says, there will be times when the heart of a Christian condemns them. That verse says, “For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.” We want to help our children understand that the reason their heart condemns them is due to the fact that they may have unconfessed sin in their lives that they need to confess to the Lord. We need to help them understand verses like II Timothy 2:19 where we read, “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: “The Lord knows those who are His,” and, “Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” This verse assures them that the Lord knows that they are His.

However, this verse together with I John 1:9 tell them the things that they need to know in order to experience a clear conscience. 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.” In I John 1:9 we see that the first thing a person needs to do to have a clear conscience is to confess any sins that they have committed to the Lord. Christ promises that He is faithful – He will always respond to our prayer of confession of sin. Second, Christ is just – He paid our penalty for sin so it is His privilege to forgive and cleanse us because He paid for our sin and we accepted the payment by repenting and placing our faith in Him.

The last sentence of II Timothy 2:19 helps us to explain to our children how to continue to experience a clear conscience. Each time they have confessed their sins to the Lord, they need to ask the Lord to give His strength to depart from iniquity (sin). We want to help them understand the promise in II Timothy 2:21-22 where we read, “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Here we have a promise that as we are confessing our sins that Christ is continually cleansing us.

As a result of this continuous cleansing, Christ has made our lives a vessel of honor. He has set us apart for Himself. He has said that we are now useful to the Master. Christ also says that He has prepared us for every good work. He tells us that to carry out these good works we are to flee one thing and follow several. We are to flee youthful lusts. Instead we are to follow or pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace. When we do these things we are able to call on the Lord from a pure heart. We continue to experience this fellowship with Christ and a clear conscience as we confess our sins as soon as we realize that we have sinned.

Then in I John 3:21 we read, “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God.” Here we see the results of a clear conscience because we are confessing our sins as soon as we realize that we have sinned. The first part of the verse reminds us of the fact that our heart does not condemn us. The second part of the verse tells us how this empowers us to serve the Lord. The word that is translated “confidence” speaks of free and fearless confidence, courage or boldness in speaking. In fact this word is translated boldness in several verses.

Acts 4:12-13 says, “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.” Here we see that Peter and John were filled with the Holy Spirit because they had a clear conscience. As a result, they spoke the Word of God with boldness. Later in the chapter we see that this same thing became true of all of the Christians that had gathered together for prayer. Acts 4:31 says, “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.” Here we see that it is normal to speak the Word of God with boldness or confidence when we have a clear conscience.

In fact as Paul asked other Christians to pray for him in Ephesians 6:19, he said, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” Paul wanted to continue to speak the Word of God with confidence or boldness even though he was in prison for his faith in Christ. He knew that as others prayed for him and he continued to confess any sins he committed that the Lord would give him many opportunities to speak the Word of God with boldness. That is why Paul used the same word when he said in Philippians 1:20-21, “According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Paul had such confidence in Christ that he wanted to magnify Christ either by life or by death.

In I John 4:17-18 we read, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 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.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children develop a clear conscience so that they will have boldness in their lives.

13.

Learning the Benefits of Godly Living

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to enjoy a clear conscience. We saw that they will experience a clear conscience as they confess their sins as soon as they realize that they have sinned. We also saw that a clear conscience will empower them to speak the Word of God with boldness because they are walking in fellowship with Christ. Today we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to enjoy three other benefits of godly living.

In I John 3:22-24 we read, “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” In these verses we see that Christ promises to answer our prayers. We see that He works mightily in our lives as we keep the new commandment. We see that we now have the Holy Spirit abiding in us. These are three very important things to help our physical and spiritual children understand.

First, in verse 22 we see that Christ promises to answer our prayers when we are walking in fellowship with Him. I John 5:14-15 says, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” In these verses we see that He will answer any prayer that is according to His will. That means that we want to help our children learn to pray according to the will of God. For example in II Peter 3:9 we read, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” Here we see that the desire of the Lord is for all people to come to repentance. As we show our children by our example how to pray regularly for the salvation of relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances we are showing them how to pray according to the will of God.

There are also many other things that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children about the way that the Lord will answer prayer in their lives. Ephesians 6:18-20 says, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul asked the Ephesian Christians to pray that the Lord would give him the strength to open his mouth boldly to share the Gospel with others. In the same way our children need to hear us praying regularly for boldness to share the Gospel with others. As they hear us pray for boldness, they will also learn to pray for boldness.

Paul began nearly every letter with a prayer for the Christians that were receiving that letter. We want to help our children learn how to pray for other Christians so that they can see the Lord answer their prayers for other Christians. An example of one of the prayers of Paul was his prayer

for the Colossians in Colossians 1:9:12, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” In this prayer we see that Paul gave us an example of how to pray for other Christians as he prayed the following things for the Christians in Colosse:

1. That they would be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.
2. That they would walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him.
3. That they would be fruitful in every good work.
4. That they would be increasing in the knowledge of God.
5. That they would be strengthened with all might according to His glorious power.
6. That they would experience all patience and longsuffering with joy.
7. That they would have an attitude of thankfulness to the Father.

Second, we see that Christ wants us to show our physical and spiritual children how to obey the new commandment. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Here we see that part of the process of helping our children become disciples is to show them how to love one another as Christ has loved them. Christ told the disciples to follow His example. He said to love each other in the same way that they had seen Christ love them. This means that the only way we can help our children learn to love as Christ loved is to show them that love by our example.

Paul often invited other Christians to follow his example. In I Corinthians 4:16 Paul said, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Then in I Corinthians 11:1 says, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Here we see that Paul gave the Corinthians an example to follow. He also explained to them the example that he was following when he said, “Just as I also imitate Christ.” In the same way we are to invite our children to imitate our example. However, we will only be effective as we are imitating Christ in our own lives. Our children watch us when other people do not see us. As a result, they know if we live what we teach others. If we live what we teach, we are actually showing them how to imitate Christ. They will then learn to imitate Christ by following our example.

We see that Paul, Silvanus and Timothy taught the new Christians in Thessalonica the same way. I Thessalonians 1:6-7 says, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” In these verses we see that the new Christians in Thessalonica had learned how to follow the Lord by following the example of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. Then we see that they used their example to help and encourage other Christians throughout Macedonia and Achaia.

Third, we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to have the Holy Spirit abiding in us. The night before His crucifixion Christ told the disciples in John 14:16-

18, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” Christ wanted the disciples and all Christians to know that He has placed the Holy Spirit in our lives so that He is in our lives and we are not alone.

In Ephesians 1:13-14 we read, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” We want to help our children understand that each one of us received the Holy Spirit at the moment that we repented of our sin and placed our trust in Christ. At the moment of our salvation the Lord placed the Holy Spirit in our lives as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation. Christ already purchased our salvation when He died for our sins. Now the Holy Spirit is placed in our lives as the guarantee until the time that we are taken to heaven.

However, the Holy Spirit does more than just guarantee our salvation. Luke 24:49 says, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Then in His final words before He returned to heaven Christ said in Acts 1:8, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The fact that we have the Holy Spirit abiding in our lives is the source of power to be able to witness effectively to others. As we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit, He gives us the power to witness boldly as we tell others about Christ.

The night before His crucifixion Christ also told us another thing that the Holy Spirit does for us because He abides in our lives. John 14:26 says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” Here we see that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher who helps us to understand and remember the things that Christ taught. I Corinthians 2:12-13 says, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” Here we see that as the Holy Spirit teaches us that He compares spiritual things with spiritual so that we gain godly wisdom instead of just human understanding.

We want to help our children understand that as they practice godly living that the Lord will answer their prayers, the Lord will give them His strength to obey the new commandment and the Lord has placed the Holy Spirit in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to enjoy the benefits of godly living.

14.

Learning to Test the spirits

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to enjoy the benefits of godly living. In I John 3:22-24 we saw three benefits mentioned. We saw that Christ promises to answer our prayers, we are given power to obey the new commandment and we have been given the Holy Spirit who now abides in our lives. Today we want to learn how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to test the spirits so that they will not be deceived by false spirits. Because they have the Holy Spirit living in their lives, we want to help them realize that they do not need to be deceived by false spirits.

I John 3:24 concluded the previous chapter by saying, “Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.” In that verse we are reminded that each of us as Christians has the Holy Spirit abiding in us. However, we want to help our physical and spiritual children realize that there are also many other spirits. That is why I John 4:1 says, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” Here we see that there are many false prophets and they get their message from evil spirits or demons. That is why it is important to help our children learn to test what they hear to see if what they are hearing is from the Holy Spirit or from other spirits.

We see that we want to help our children learn to test every teaching that they hear to see if it agrees with two things. First, we want to show them how to test what they hear to see whether it agrees with the doctrine of Christ. I John 4:2-4 says, “By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” We want to help our children realize that the Holy Spirit will give true teaching about Christ while other spirits will not give true teaching about Christ.

In the verses above we see that one thing that false teachers who get their teachings from other spirits often deny is the fact that Christ has come in the flesh. It is important to help our children understand that Christ became a true man with true human flesh. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Many false teachers will deny the humanity of Christ. The Holy Spirit will help our children to quickly recognize that a person is a false teacher if that person denies that Christ took on true human flesh when He came to this earth.

Earlier in I John we also see that the Holy Spirit will reveal another false teaching that comes from demonic spirits. I John 2:22-23 says, “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” Here we see that another common message of false teachers is to deny that Jesus is the Anointed One of the Father. In doing this such

false teachers are denying the Deity of Christ and the fact that He is One with the Father. The Jews clearly understood that if Christ and the Father are One that Christ is truly God. In fact John 10:30-31 says, "I and My Father are one." Then the Jews took up stones again to stone Him." The reason that the Jews were ready to stone Christ was due to the fact that they did not want to accept His statement that He was equal with the Father.

In fact it was this very statement that caused the Jewish religious leaders to condemn Christ to death. Matthew 26:63-66 says, "But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?" They answered and said, "He is deserving of death." The chief priests and other religious leaders were controlled by the very same false spirits that control false teachers today. That is why they condemned Christ to death.

John wanted to make it clear to his spiritual children that some false teachers will deny that Christ truly came in the flesh while other false teachers will deny that Christ is from the Father and is equal with the Father. The spirits that gave these false teachers their false message in the time that John wrote are just as active today. That is why we want to help our children understand that there are many false spirits who are giving false teachers their false teaching that deny either the humanity of Christ or the deity of Christ. In fact John said in I John 4:4 that is one of the reasons why all Christians have been given the Holy Spirit. That verse says, "You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." The Holy Spirit will help our physical and spiritual children to recognize that these false teachings are false.

Ephesians 4:14 says, "That we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting." Here we see that it is possible for a very immature Christian to be deceived by such false teachers. That is why every Christian needs a spiritual parent to help them grow up in their spiritual lives. The next verse, Ephesians 4:15 says, "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ--." Here we see that such immature Christians need a spiritual parent to help them grow up so that they learn to speak the truth in love instead of continuing to be deceived by false teachers. Then such true Christians will no longer be deceived.

We said earlier that we want to help our children learn to test every teaching that they hear to see if it agrees with two things. The first thing was to test to see whether the teaching given by a spirit agrees with the doctrine of Christ. If the teaching is from the Holy Spirit, it will agree with the doctrine of Christ. The second thing we want to help our children learn to do is to test each teaching to see if it agrees with the Word of God. I John 4:5-6 says, "They are of the world. Therefore they speak as of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." Here we see that these other spirits are of the world. That is due to the fact that they are demonic spirits that follow Satan.

False teachers who get their teaching from demonic spirits will be very popular. Verse five tells us that such teachings will be very popular with the people who are of the world because such people do not have the Holy Spirit in their lives. II Timothy 4:3-4 tells us the goal of such false spirits when those verses say, “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.” False teachers have always been popular with the world because they tell sinful and rebellious people what they want to hear instead of telling them the truth.

In fact the goal of false teachers is to turn people away from the truth and to turn them to fables. In all five places where the word “fables” is used it is used in the context of false teachings. In fact the reason that Paul says he left Timothy in Ephesus in I Timothy 1:3-4 says, “As I urged you when I went into Macedonia--remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith.” As we saw earlier in Ephesians 4:14 that Paul recognized that there were some very immature Christians who were being deceived by these false teachers who would actually lie in wait to deceive immature Christians.

Paul told Timothy in II Timothy 4:2, the verse just before Paul warned about false teachers says, “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Both Paul and John focused on the fact that true teaching will always come from the Word of God. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to teach and answer questions from the Word of God instead of giving their own opinions. When John wrote the book of Revelation, God led him to write in Revelation 22:18-19, “For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” We want to show our children by our own example that we do not add to the Word of God or take away from the Word of God.

We help our physical and spiritual children learn to test the spirits as we help them understand the true doctrine of Christ. That includes both the fact that He came in the flesh and that He is the Son of God. We also help them learn to teach the Word of God from its context and not give their own ideas or opinions. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to test the spirits so that they are not deceived and do not deceive others.

15.

Learning to Grow in Love

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to test the spirits. We saw that we help them to do that as we help them to develop a clear understanding of the doctrine of Christ. We saw that includes both the fact that Christ became flesh and that He is the Son of God. We saw that we also help them learn to teach and answer questions from the Word of God and not from their own opinions. Today we will focus on how we help our children learn to grow in love.

At the moment that we became a Christian, many wonderful things happened in our lives. One of those things is described for us in II Peter 1:4 where we read, “By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” In this verse we see that we now share in the divine nature. This happens because our body becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. I Corinthians 6:19-20 says, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” This means that we are now given the power to use our body to glorify God instead of carry out the evil desires of our old sin nature.

That sharing in the divine nature is what makes it possible for us to show our children how to love one another as Christians. I John 4:7-8 says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.” Here we see that the very nature of God is love. We help our children learn to understand that we are born of God and know God so it is now a part of our nature to love others also. If we do not have a love and concern for others, we need to examine our lives to make sure that we have really placed our trust in Christ. Since God has shared His nature with us this means that when we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit that our human nature is controlled by the love of God instead of the fear of people. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to show the love of God as we yield to Him.

As a new Christian we certainly did not understand all that the Lord has done for us. The same thing is true for our children when they repent of their sin of unbelief and turn to Christ. However, we did recognize very soon that we had a greater concern for others. Now we understand that this is the result of the Lord sharing His nature in us. Christ shared His nature with us so that we would have both the desire and the power to carry out the new commandment that He gave. That new commandment in John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The nature Christ shared with us gives us the desire to love as Christ loved us and the Holy Spirit gives us the power to love as Christ loved us.

However, Christ did more than just share His nature with us to help us learn to grow in love. In I John 4:9 we read, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only

begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” Here we see that both the Father and Christ gave us an example to follow by making their love visible to us. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Here we see that the Father showed His love by sending Christ to this earth to pay for our sin. We certainly see His love in the fact that He was willing to give His only Son to pay our penalty for our sin so that He could freely forgive us.

However, Christ also showed His love to us by coming to this earth. John 1:14 says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” John and the other disciples had the opportunity to closely observe Christ for nearly three and a half years. As John described what He saw as He observed Christ, we see that John saw that Christ was full of grace and truth. Christ said in John 8:32, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Later He said in John 14:6, “Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

In Galatians 5:13 we see how this freedom or liberty should affect our lives. That verse 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.” That freedom and liberty that Christ has given us has now made it possible for us to carry out the new commandment because He gives us the power to serve one another in love. We begin to grow in that love as we grow in our understanding of the liberty that Christ has given us.

A person that is controlled by fear and is not a Christian has no desire to show love to others. A person who becomes a Christian but is still controlled by fear is afraid to do anything to serve others because he is afraid he might do the wrong thing. In contrast, a Christian that is taking root in Christ and His love becomes motivated by that love. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “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 our children to grow in their understanding of the love of Christ, they will develop a desire to live for Him who died for them and rose again.

That is why I John 4:10-11 says, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.” We want to help our children understand that love started with God and not with us. Romans 5:8 says, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God did not wait to show His love to us until we first showed love to Him. Instead God showed His love toward us long before we ever came to Christ. He showed that love while we were still in sin. He showed that love by sending Christ to die for us.

One of the greatest hindrances to helping our children or other family members grow in love is pride in our own life. When we have pride in our own life, we are quick to judge others. That is why James 4:10-11 says, “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge.” That is why Romans 14:13 tells us, “Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way.” If we find that we are judging our children, we need 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.” As we walk in Christ and become rooted and built up in Him we see that our lives will begin to abound with thanksgiving instead of judgment. As a result, we will show our children by our example that the love of Christ is changing us from being a judge to a person that is abounding in thanksgiving.

Colossians 3:16-17 tells us how we transform our lives and the lives of our children from being judgmental to thankful. Those verses says, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.” Here we see that one of the things that helps both we and our children to grow in love is to let the Word of Christ be the center of our lives and our thoughts. Then we will teach and admonish were grace in our hearts. We will also have a thankful attitude in all that we do.

I John 4:10 also tells us that Christ is the propitiation for our sins. The word “propitiation” means that which satisfies. The Father was satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sin. As a result, I John 2:1-2 says that He no longer judges us once we have placed our trust in Christ. Those verses say, “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.” We want to help our children understand that when Satan accuses us that Christ is our Advocate or defense attorney. He says that He paid for our sins and we accepted the payment. The Father says He is satisfied with the payment and dismisses the charges of which Satan accused us.

It is this love of Christ and the Father for us that is the basis for us growing in love so that we love others with that same love. God forgave all of our sins because Christ paid the penalty for our sin with His blood, we have a debt to love others as Christ has loved us. We want to help both our physical and spiritual children grow in their understanding of the greatness of that love. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children grow in the love of Christ so that His love works in their lives and flows through their lives to others.

Learning to Abide in the Love of God

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to grow in love. We saw that love is the nature of God and that because Christ placed the Holy Spirit in our lives at the moment of salvation that love is now a part of our new nature as Christians. We saw that we help our children to grow in the love of Christ as we model that love in our own lives. Today we will focus on how we help our children learn to abide in the love of God.

In I John 4:12 we read, “No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.” Since Christ returned to heaven, the world cannot see Him. As a result, the only way that the world sees the love of Christ is as they see the love of Christ in our lives. That is why we want to help our children develop a mature love. In Galatians 2:20 we read that Christ lives in us. In Romans 8:9 we see that the Holy Spirit dwells in us. In this verse we see that God abides in us. As we help our children understand that the entire Trinity lives in their lives, we want to help them understand that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are developing godly love in their lives as they grow and mature.

In this verse we see what happens as we learn to abide in the love of God. This development of godly love in the lives of Christians is the way that the world sees the love of Christ. That is why Christ promised in John 15:4, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.” Notice a key fact. The branch does not produce fruit. The fruit is produced by the vine. The branch only bears fruit. To bear fruit means to carry the fruit that is produced by the vine. As we abide in the love of God, that love is carried to the world around us.

Here we see that the evidence of the maturity of our love is the amount of love that flows through our lives both to other Christians and to the world around us. 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.” The liberty that Christ has given us is not for the purpose of sin. Instead that liberty is to make it possible for us to serve one another as Christians in love. In the same way as that love flows through our lives, Christ uses that love to draw others to Christ. That is why Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” We are to look for opportunities to allow the love of Christ to flow through our lives both to Christians and to non-Christians.

Since the love of Christ only flows through our lives when we are abiding in Christ, we want to help our children understand what it means to abide in Christ. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “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.” One thing that helps us to abide in Christ is to regularly remember the love that He showed to us when He died for us. We need to understand our condition at the time that Christ died for us. Ephesians 2:12-13 says, “That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the

commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” We had no hope but have now been given hope. We have been brought near the Father by the blood of Christ.

A second thing that helps us to abide in Christ is to learn to take root in Christ. 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.” We learn to become rooted in Christ as we learn to meditate on the things that Christ taught. Psalm 1:1-3 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.” As we meditate on the things Christ taught, we learn to abide in Christ and become rooted in Him.

A third thing that helps us to abide in Christ is to learn to take root in the love of Christ. 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 want to help our children really learn to take root in the love of Christ. The more our children understand and take root in the love of Christ, the more that love will be brought to maturity in their lives.

We go on to read in I John 4:13-16, “By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” In these verses we see that as we learn to abide in God that we also teach proper doctrine about the entire Trinity.

Verse 13 points out the fact that part of the assurance of our salvation is the fact that the Holy Spirit abides in us. We want to help our children understand that we have been given the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our eternal salvation. Ephesians 1:13-14 says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” The reason why it is important for our children to understand that the Holy Spirit dwells in them is the Holy Spirit is our source of power. Christ told the disciples in Luke 24:49 before they received the Holy Spirit, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” Now we want to help our children understand that they were given the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation.

Verse 14 points out the fact that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We want to help our children understand why the Father sent Christ. Here we see that He sent Christ to be the Savior of the world. That means as that we help our children learn to abide in God we want to help them understand that they have been given a purpose as they live in this world. That purpose is to

help the people of the world understand that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. II Corinthians 5:20 says, "Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God." We want to model for both our physical and spiritual children that our purpose as Christians here on this earth is to be the ambassadors of Christ and share the message that the Father sent Christ to be the Savior of the world.

Verse 15 points out the fact that we know that we abide in God because we confess that Jesus is the Christ. John 20:30-31 tells us, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name." We want to help our children clearly understand that Christ is the Son of God and that as a result people can have eternal life through Christ and only through Christ. John 14:6 says, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." In order to carry out the purpose that God has given us for our lives, we need to be able to show our children how to explain to others in love that the only way that they can come to the Father is through Christ.

Verse 16 points out the fact we have known and believed the love that God has for us. Here we see that we want to show our children the difference between those who have eternal life and those who do not. John 8:31-32 says, "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." People can believe that Christ is the Son of God and yet not place their trust in Him. However, those who place their trust in His Word and continue in His Word are true disciples who have eternal life.

Christ gave an illustration of what it means to continue in His Word when He said in Matthew 7:24-27, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." Christ said that the person who hears His Word and obeys it is building on a solid foundation that will last. That is what we want to help our children do and teach others to do. Then they know they are abiding in God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to abide in the love of God and equip them to help others learn how to abide in that love.

17.

Learning How Love Defeats Fear

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to abide in the love of God. We saw that God wants them to grow so that their lives develop a mature godly love. This will help them learn how to equip others to abide in the love of God. Today we will focus on how we help our children learn how to abide in the love of God and defeat the fear that is in their lives.

In some of our topics in the past we have focused on the fact that we are to help our children learn to pray for boldness to speak the Word of God to those who are not Christians. However, that is not the only area of life where the Lord wants us to help them develop boldness. In I John 4:17 we read, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." Here we see that it is not the desire of the Lord for Christians to be fearful in their lives either in the present or as they look forward to the Day of Judgment. In this verse we see that as the love of Christ grows to maturity in our lives that we will be able to look forward to the Day of Judgment with boldness.

First, we want to help our children understand that the Day of Judgment will be very different for those who have placed their trust in Christ and those who have not placed their trust in Christ. The Day of Judgment for those who are not Christians is described in Revelation 20:12-15 where we read, "And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Those who are not Christians have very good reasons to fear the final judgment.

Those who are not Christians will be judged for every sin that they have committed when they stand before God on the Day of Judgment. Every sinful thought, word or action that they have ever committed in their lives has been recorded. The books that have these records will be opened on the Day of Judgment and every non-Christian will be forced to admit that their lives were filled with sin. Following their judgment, they will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where they will burn forever. All individuals who have not repented of their sin and placed their faith in Christ and the salvation that He provided have every reason to fear the Day of Judgment.

That is why II Corinthians 5:10-11 says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences." Since we know the terror that people who reject Christ face that is why we share the Gospel with others and seek to persuade them to turn from their sin and turn to Christ. They will be judged for every evil deed that they have done.

For all of us who have placed our trust in Christ we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. There Christ is going to reward us for what we have done in our service for Him since we became Christians because all of our sins have been blotted out and Christ has promised that He will remember them no more. As a result, I Corinthians 3:12-15 says, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” Here we see that our works as Christians will be tested to see what works can be rewarded.

Every work that we have done that has eternal value will be like gold, silver or precious stones. Every work that we did that was for earthly reward will have no value for eternity and will be like wood, hay or straw. The Lord will test all of these works by fire. Those works that have eternal value will be purified by the fire and will have even greater beauty. Those works that only have earthly value will be removed when they are tested by fire. As a result, we will have boldness as we start before Christ if we have done works that have eternal value because we will be able to look forward to the rewards that we will receive from Christ.

That is why I John 4:18-19 tell us, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” We want to help our children learn to be led by the love of Christ. II Corinthians 5:14-15 says, “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 our children to take root in Christ and His love they will lose their fear of future judgment because they will become motivated to live for Christ instead of themselves and more and more of their works will become works with eternal value.

When Christians are not led by the love of Christ, they remain driven by fear and continue to make it their goal to please people instead of please the Lord. I Corinthians 3:1-3 says, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” The Corinthians had been Christians for a period of time. However, most of them had experienced limited growth in their spiritual lives and were still controlled by fear. As a result, their lives were still filled with envy, strife and divisions because they were still driven by fear.

That is why we want to help our children grow and mature in the understanding of the love of Christ for them. I John 4:19 points out the fact that what we actually do is help our children learn to respond to the love of Christ when it says, “We love Him because He first loved us.” This means that as they grow in their understanding of the love of Christ for them that they will also grow in their love for Christ. We also want to show them how to help other new or weak Christians grow and develop a mature love.

Many Christians do not understand how to grow and mature in the love of Christ. Christ demonstrated His love for people by being patient and kind to them even when they rejected Him. I John 4:20-21 tells us how we can help our children understand when they are learning to be led by the love of Christ. Those verses say, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also." The evidence of the fact that people have a love for God is shown by the fact that they have learned to love other people. This is what makes it possible for them to follow the example of Christ and be patient and kind even to those who reject them.

Christ also demonstrated His love for people by His compassion for them. Matthew 9:36-38 says, "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." We want to show our children by our example compassion for all people that do not yet have Christ as their Shepherd. This is the way that they learn to show the love of Christ to those who do not yet know Christ.

One of the things that I John 4:20 points out is the fact that a person cannot say that he loves God when he hates a brother. The very nature of Christ is to love. As a result, Christ gave us His nature at the moment we placed our trust in Him and it became a part of our nature to love others. That is why all growing Christians will have any previous hatred that they have had toward others replaced by love as they grow and take root in the love of Christ.

I John 4:19 says that we love God because He first loved us. Then I John 4:21 says that if we love God that we are commanded to love our brother also. We are able to love our brother as we love God as we yield our lives to Christ. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that any moment that they are yielding to Christ that the love of Christ will flow through their life to the lives of others. As that love flows through our lives and the lives of our children, others will be drawn to Christ if they are not Christians. If they are Christians, that love flowing through our lives will help them to grow in their understanding of the love of Christ.

Christ does not want any Christian to be living in fear. Instead Christ wants every Christian to learn to take root in His love. That is why Paul gave us a model in Ephesians 3:17-19 of praying for others that they will take root in the love of Christ that passes all understanding. We also want to pray that our physical and spiritual children will take root in the love of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children move from being driven by fear to being led by the love of Christ.

Learning to be Overcomers

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn to abide in the love of Christ and defeat the fear that is in their lives. As we are helping our physical and spiritual children learn to abide in Christ and defeat the fear that is in their lives, we also want to help them learn how to experience victory over all that is a part of the world in their lives. Believers do not need to live lives of defeat as Christians. Instead Christ wants us to understand that He has already overcome the world and because we have placed our faith in Him that we are also overcomers. That will be the focus of our topic today.

Many Christians live lives of defeat. That is not the plan of Christ for Christians. Instead Christ wants us to understand that we are overcomers and all that it means to be overcomers. We also want to help our physical and spiritual children understand what it means to be overcomers. In I John 5:4 we read, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith." Every Christian is an overcomer because II Corinthians 5:17 says that we are in Christ and Galatians 2:20 says that Christ lives in us.

It is this relationship that we have with Christ because we are in Christ and He is in us that makes us overcomers. In John 16:33 Christ said, "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Christ has overcome the world and because Christ dwells in our life that means that we have also overcome the world if we have placed our trust in Christ. This is what makes it possible for a Christian to experience a life of more and more victory as we grow in Christ.

In John 3:1-8 Christ explained the difference between physical birth and spiritual birth to Nicodemus. Verse 8 says, "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." Christ summarized His explanation of spiritual birth by saying that everyone that experiences spiritual birth has been born of God. In the first few verses of I John 5 we see three characteristics of an overcomer. I John 5:1 says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him." In this verse we see that the first characteristic of a person that is born on God is that the person believes that Jesus is the Christ.

Physical birth produces many changes when an infant comes out of the womb of the mother and begins a new life. In the same way spiritual birth produces many changes when a person is born of God. In fact 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." Here we see that spiritual birth makes a person a new creation. The reason that we become a new creation at the moment of spiritual birth is due to the fact that we became partakers of the divine nature at that moment. 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." This is the reason that true belief will cause changes in the life of every new

Christian. The divine nature gives us a desire to please God and do what is right in the sight of God.

The second characteristic of a person that is born of God is given for us in I John 5:2 where we read, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments." In addition to belief, this verse tells us that the second characteristic of a person that is born of God is that the person will love God and have a desire to keep His commandments. This desire to keep His commandments will start with a desire to keep the new commandment that Christ gave the night before He was crucified. John 13:34-35 says, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." As a result, a person that has been born of God will have a desire to love God and love other Christians.

In I John 5:3 we see the third characteristic of a person that is born of God. That verse says, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." Here we see that a person that is born of God has a desire to be obedient and keep the commandments of the Lord. One of the things about the commandments of the Lord is that His commandments are not burdensome. This means that the commandments of the Lord are not like a heavy weight. In contrast, the rules of most religions are like heavy weights. Christ described the heavy weight of the rules of the Pharisees when He said in Matthew 23:2-4, "Saying: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.'" The heavy burdens that various religions place on others are often efforts to try to earn salvation through works.

Since our physical and spiritual children are already overcomers if they have placed their trust in Christ, we want to show them how to experience the victory that the Lord has already given them at the time that they placed their faith in Christ. Many times new Christians have never been shown how to let the love of Christ guide and direct them in their daily lives. They do not practice obedience in daily living. They have been given the divine nature but they have never grown enough to see that become a part of their daily life. That is why they need an example to follow.

In I Corinthians 3:1-3 we see that the Corinthian Christians had not grown properly. Those verses say, "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" Instead of practicing love and obedience in their lives, we see that the lives of the Corinthian Christians were filled with envy, strife and divisions and they were acting like people that were not Christians.

As a result, Paul explained the importance of spiritual parents to help new and struggling Christians in their spiritual growth. In I Corinthians 4:14-17 Paul wrote, "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.” Then in I Corinthians 11:1 Paul said again, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.” Since Paul realized his responsibility to be a spiritual parent, in both passages Paul invited the struggling Corinthian Christians to follow His example. In the same way, we need to show our children how to be overcomers and experience victory in their lives by providing our own example for them to imitate.

One of the reasons why new and struggling Christians do not experience victory in their lives is due to the fact that they are trying to live the Christian life in their own strength. That is why we need to help them understand that when they depend on their own strength to live the Christian life that Romans 7:18-19 says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.” We want to help our children understand that we cannot experience victory in our own strength.

In contrast, we want to help our children understand what happens as they learn to take root in Christ (Colossians 2:6-7) and the love of Christ (Ephesians 3:17-19). Romans 8:37-39 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Since the divine nature is love, at any time they are yielding to the Lord, the love of Christ will be flowing through their lives. That is why Romans 6:13-16 says, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” As we show them by our example what it means to yield to Christ, they will experience victory in their lives.

All Christians have been given the divine nature so that they can be overcomers. They need a godly example to imitate as they learn to imitate our lives as we follow Christ. Then they will be shown by example how to apply James 1:22 in their lives. That verse says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” As they learn to walk in love and obedience, they will experience great joy in their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you give your physical and spiritual children an example to follow.

Learning we can be Certain of Eternal Life

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to be overcomers. We help our children to understand that we were given the divine nature at the moment that we repented of our sin and placed our trust in Christ. We then show our children by our example that as a result of having the divine nature that it is our desire to love the Lord and others and to be obedient to the Lord. Then we help them grow and learn to experience victory as they learn to yield more and more frequently to Christ. Today we will see how to help our children be certain that they have been given eternal life.

In I John 2:12 we read, "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." Here we see that one of the things that spiritual children know is that their sins are forgiven. However, there are many people who have followed Christ for many years that are not certain that they have had their sins forgiven. As a result, they are not certain that they have eternal life. Such people are basing their beliefs on the opinions of others instead of basing their beliefs on the Word of God. We want to help our physical and spiritual children know what the Word of God says so that they will base their beliefs on the promises of God.

In I John 5:9 we see that one of the things that we want our children to understand is the fact that the promises of God are greater than the words of other people. That verse says, "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son." The Father has given us testimony about His Son because He wants us to be overcomers and experience the victory that Christ has made available. In this verse we see that the Father has testified that Christ is His Son. Because of that witness we know that all that the Father says about Christ is true and we can place our trust in what the Father has said about the fact that we receive forgiveness of sin and salvation when we place our trust in Christ.

Then I John 5:10 goes on to say, "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son." In addition to the promises that the Father has given us in His Word about forgiveness through Christ, we also have the witness of the Holy Spirit within our lives. Anyone who rejects what the Father has said about forgiveness through Christ is actually calling God a liar. That means that the person has never received Christ because that person has not believed what the Father has said about Christ.

However, it is the desire of the Lord that every person who has placed his or her trust in Christ will know that God has forgiven his or her sin. That is why I John 2:1-2 tells us that the Father is satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sin. Those verses say, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." The word propitiation means "that which satisfies". The Father says that He is satisfied with the payment that Christ made for our sins and on that basis has forgiven us.

As we come to I John 5:11-13 we see one of the great results of that forgiveness of our sins. Those verses tell us, "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." God gives His testimony to every person that has placed their faith and trust in Christ and the payment that He made for our sins that because our sins are forgiven that God has given eternal life to us.

An important thing to notice is that this verse tells us that God has already given us that eternal life. In fact Ephesians 1:13-14 says, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." Here we see the fact that we received the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation is the guarantee of the fact that we have been given eternal life. Romans 8:9 says, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." If we do not have the Holy Spirit, we have never placed our trust in Christ. If we have the Holy Spirit, He is the guarantee of the fact that we have been given eternal life.

Due to a lack of understanding of passages like the passage here in I John 5:11-13 many Christians are still uncertain whether they have eternal life. That is why we want to help our children clearly understand these verses both for their own lives and so that they can help others to understand these verses. Verse 12 says, "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." This verse makes it very clear that if we have the Son that we do have life. Galatians 2:20 promises us that as Christians we have Christ living in our lives when that verse says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Since Christ lives in the life of every Christian, every Christian can know that God has already given them eternal life.

Just as verse 12 says that every person that has the Son already has eternal life, that verse also states that every person that does not have the Son does not have eternal life. This is a warning to anyone who might try to depend on something else to give them eternal life. Christ said in John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Christ is the only way to the Father. Christ is the source of all truth. Christ is the source of eternal life. That is why each person must make the choice to repent of their sin and come to the Father by placing their faith in the fact that Christ died for their sin and the Father showed that He was satisfied with the payment by raising Christ from the dead. We need to help our children know how to explain the choice that every person must make in order to receive eternal life.

I John 5:13 says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." John said in this verse that He was writing to those who already believed in the name of the Son of God. As John neared the conclusion to the book of John, he told why that book was written. John 20:30-31 says, "And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His

disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” We see that the book of John was written so that people would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and receive eternal life. Here we see that as John nears the conclusion of this book he said that his reason for writing this book was to give all who have believed assurance that they have eternal life.

God wants all Christians to know that they have received eternal life. I John 4:17-18 says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. 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.” Here we see that as Christians the Lord does not want us to have fear as we face the Day of Judgment. Instead He wants us to have boldness. That will only happen as the fear of judgment is taken away.

As Christians, we will stand at the judgment seat of Christ. II Corinthians 5:10 says, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” Those who have rejected Christ will be judged for their sins. However, as Christians, our works will be examined to see what works can be rewarded. I Corinthians 3:12-15 says that our works will be tested by fire when those verses say, “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” The works that are for this earth will be like wood, hay and stubble and will be quickly gone. The works that are for eternity will be purified and will shine in all of their glory.

In Matthew 10:42 we read, “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” Here we see that the Lord will reward even the smallest work that was done in His name. This is why we can stand with boldness before the Lord because He is going to reward us for our works of service that have eternal value and there will be no judgment for our sins because they have been blotted out and removed. If our physical and spiritual children know that they have eternal life, they can look forward with boldness to that day. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children understand how they can have boldness when they meet Christ.

Learning to Know God Answers Prayer

In our last topic we saw that one of our goals as Christians should be to help our physical and spiritual children learn that they can be certain that they have eternal life. We saw that those who have repented of their sin and placed their trust in Christ can have the assurance that their sins are forgiven and that they have eternal life. That assurance is very important for our children and for all Christians. Today we will see what God says about how to help our physical and spiritual children know that God will answer their prayers as they pray to Him.

I John 5:14-15 tell us, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Here we see that every Christian can know that Christ will hear and answer their prayers if they learn to pray according to the will of God. This means that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to pray according to the will of God so that they can know that their prayers will be answered.

Many times as Christians we do not know how to pray because of our own weakness. Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Here we see that when we pray in our weakness that the Holy Spirit understands the desires of our heart and makes intercession for us during the time that we do not know how to pray. At those times we see that the Holy Spirit prays for us and makes His prayers according to the will of God.

However, we also want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to pray according to the will of God. Our children will learn to pray according to the will of God as we do two things. First, we show them by our own example that we make it our purpose to pray according to the will of God. Second, we help them to understand the example that Christ has provided for us. In Matthew 26:39 we read, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” Christ knew that He would soon experience separation from the Father as He hung on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. He told the Father that if there was another way to pay for sin to let this cup pass from Him. However, Christ wanted the will of the Father even if it meant separation, suffering and death. We want to encourage our children to follow the example of Christ.

In addition, we want to help them understand the things that God clearly states are His will so that they can pray for the things that are the will of God. Then they can expect the Lord to answer their prayers. Different words are used for the will of God. One of those words speaks of the purpose or will of God. It speaks about those things that God desires. In James 1:18 we see that God saved us by His own will. That verse says, “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.” Here we see that we are saved by the will of God and not our own will. We are the first examples of what God does when He makes people new creations.

This word is also used in II Peter 3:9 where we read, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” In this verse we see that it is not the desire of God that any should perish. It is His desire that all will come to repentance. One of the things we can encourage our physical and spiritual children to do is to develop a list of their relatives, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other acquaintances that are not Christians and begin to pray daily for their salvation.

Since they can know as they pray for the salvation of others that they are praying according to the will of God, I John 5:14-15 gives the promise that they will see the Lord answer their prayers for the salvation of others. As those verses say, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.” Because we and our children can know that we are praying according to the will of God as we pray for the salvation of others, we can know that one by one we will see those for whom we are praying repent of their sin and place their faith in Christ.

In I Corinthians 12:11 we see that God has also gives us the spiritual gifts that He has given to us according to His will. That verse says, “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” That entire chapter points out that God has given those gifts so that each one of us will be able to carry out the will that the Lord has for each of our lives. Some of our children are given gifts of speaking and others are given gifts of serving. I Peter 4:10-11 indicates that we should pray that we will use our gifts to carry out the will of the Lord. 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 God has given us a gift to speak, we need to pray that the Lord will speak through His Word as we share the Word of God. If God has given us a gift to serve, we need to pray that we will serve with the ability which God supplies.

A second word that speaks of the will of God is the word that Christ used as He prayed in garden. That word speaks of the things that God wishes or determines will be done. That is the word that is used in I John 5:14. We also see many things that God wills to be done. We also need to show our children by example the importance of praying for these things. In I Thessalonians 5:17-18 we read, “Pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” In these verses we see that we are to pray at all times and for all things with thanks to God in our lives. One of the most important things we can do in our lives is show our physical and spiritual children how to be thankful to the Lord in all situations.

This word is also used in I Thessalonians 4:3 where we read, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.” Here we see that it is the will of God for us to avoid any form of sexual immorality. For this reason we need to show our children the importance of praying for victory over temptation. I Corinthians 10:12-13 says, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are

able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” Here we see that learning to pray for the will of God means that we pray that the Lord will give us His strength when we are tempted to sin.

Ephesians 5:15-18 says, “See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is, and do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” Here we see that we are to show our children how to have a godly walk in their lives and also learn to make wise use of their time. In order to do these two things we need to show them the importance of praying for wisdom so that we will know what the will of the Lord is. Then we pray that the Lord will give us His strength as we yield to the Holy Spirit to do those things so that we can make our lives count and have an impact for eternity.

Ephesians 6:5-7 even shows us that we need to teach our children to pray about the way that they work. Those verses say, “Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Here we see that we want to help our children understand the importance of praying that they will work to please the Lord by doing the will of God from their hearts as they work. In this way their lives will be a testimony for the Lord as they work.

In Colossians 1:9-12 Paul gives us an example of the way to pray for our children when he says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” As we pray for our physical and spiritual children to know the will of the Lord, we will also see the Lord answer our prayers for them.

As our children learn to pray for these things and others things that the Lord says are His will, the Lord will be able to work through the lives of our physical and spiritual children in a powerful way. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children the fact that God will answer their prayers as they pray according to the will of God.