

Developing Effective Follow-Up

**Growing Christian Leaders Series
Manual 2**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. Helping New Christians Begin to Grow

Today, we are going to begin a new series of topics on “Helping New Christians Begin to Grow.” In this series, we will be focusing on the topic of how we help people once they become Christians. Like physical birth and growth, most of the work in spiritual development happens after spiritual birth. Spiritual birth is just the beginning of the process which helps a person move from becoming a Christian to becoming a healthy reproducing Christian.

In the physical life, if a couple brought a new born home from the hospital and set the new baby out on the front porch and said, “We have done our part because we brought this baby into the world. Now it is up to the baby to grow on its own,” that couple would be charged with child endangerment because they were endangering the life of that child. However, many Christians have a similar attitude. They lead a person to Christ and feel that they have done their part and it is now up to that new Christian to grow on his or her own.

With a physical child, most of the work happens during the eighteen or twenty years after the child is born. The same is true for the spiritual new born. Most of the work to help that new Christian grow happens after his or her spiritual birth. We need to have as much concern for the spiritual development of a new Christian as we have for the physical development of a physical child who has just been born. If someone does not provide that spiritual care for the spiritual new born, that new Christian will not experience a healthy development.

Scripture talks about various levels of spiritual maturity and these levels of spiritual maturity are very comparable to the similar levels of physical maturity. Those levels include:

- ♦ Spiritual new born - 1 Peter 2:2
- ♦ Spiritual toddler - 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 5:11-14
- ♦ Spiritual child - 1 John 2:12-14
- ♦ Spiritual young man - 1 John 2:12-14
- ♦ Spiritual parent - 1 John 2:12-14; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12

All new Christians need spiritual parents to help them in their spiritual growth. In a Christian home, the physical parents will often become the spiritual parents as well. However, for those who do not grow up in a Christian home or for those who become Christians as adults, they need one or more spiritual parents to help them in their spiritual growth. Ideally, some mature Christian should take the responsibility to become a spiritual parent to the new Christian within 24 hours after their spiritual birth. Tragically, many new Christians never get a spiritual parent and so they fail to grow beyond the spiritual toddler stage. As a result, many people who have been Christians for twenty or thirty years demonstrate most or all of the characteristics of a spiritual toddler. Those characteristics include:

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

As we look at these characteristics of a spiritual toddler (the word used in these passages means the child who is not able to speak clearly), we see characteristics which are common in the lives of people who have only been Christians for a few weeks or months. However, there is a major

problem when these characteristics describe a person who has been a Christian for many years. The tragedy is that we all know people who have been Christians for many years whose lives demonstrate most or all of these characteristics including some who hold positions of leadership in churches.

At each of the different levels of spiritual maturity, a Christian will have a different focus. In fact that focus will help you understand where that person is in their spiritual growth so that you can best know how to help that person grow to the next level of spiritual maturity. The focus of the person at each of the various levels of spiritual maturity is:

- The spiritual infant - food (1 Peter 2:2)
- The spiritual toddler - MY needs, MY Problems (1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14; Hebrews 5:11-14)
- The spiritual child - growth (1 John 2:12-14, 18)
- The spiritual young man - service (1 John 2:12-14)
- The spiritual parent - care of spiritual children (1 John 2:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12)

When we become a spiritual parent to a spiritual newborn or a spiritual toddler, we need to understand the description of a spiritual child as given in 1 John 2:12-14 and Luke 1:80 and 2:40. In those verses, we see that a spiritual child:

- ⇒ Knows that his sins are forgiven
- ⇒ Is becoming strong in spirit

Those same verses (1 John 2:12-14) describe a spiritual young man (or woman). He or she:

- * Has become strong in spirit
- * Has the Word of God in his heart
- * Has overcome Satan and is experiencing a life of joy and victory instead of defeat

A spiritual parent is described in 1 John 2:12-14 and 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 where we see he or she:

- Has grown to know the God of the Word
- Leads others by love and example

Most Christians can only really understand one level of spiritual maturity beyond the level of maturity that they are presently experiencing. This is especially true of the spiritual toddler because he or she is usually struggling. The spiritual toddler is often like a physical toddler who just got out of diapers and off of the bottle when a new baby brother or sister is born. Suddenly the toddler is stealing the baby's bottle and needs diapers again because the new baby is getting all of the attention and the toddler is jealous.

Most spiritual toddlers read the description of a spiritual young man and say that sounds like an impossibility for a Christian to experience those characteristics while here on this earth. That is why the spiritual toddler really needs one or more spiritual parents who will walk alongside him so that the toddler begins to understand the love of Christ and sees an example of someone who is taking root in that love - Ephesians 3:16-19. In the coming weeks, we will be discussing how to help new Christians and spiritual toddlers in their spiritual growth. May the Lord richly bless you as you help others grow.

2. Reversing the Effects of Original Sin

Many times, we do not know exactly where to begin to help new Christians in their spiritual growth. One of the places that I like to begin is by going back to the original sin and Adam in Genesis 3. In Genesis 3:7-13, we see how original sin affected Adam and Eve. That original sin caused the following changes in their relationships:

With God - separation (They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden and they hid themselves - Genesis 3:8)

Within - fear, guilt and shame

- fear (“I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” - Genesis 3:10)
- guilt (“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’” - Genesis 3:9)
- shame (“Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” - Genesis 3:7)

With others - blame (“Then the man said, ‘The woman whom you gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’” - Genesis 3:12)

Before people become Christians, these are the five things that motivate them in their lives whether they realize it or not. If a new Christian does not learn how to reverse the effects of original sin, these will still be the same things that motivate them many years later. That is why many people who have been Christians for many years are still spiritual toddlers and their focus in life is: My Needs and MY Problems.

We will see from Scripture that Christ wants to reverse the effects of original sin by helping new Christians learn to move from the five results of original sin and learn to move toward:

1. Separation - moving toward relationship and fellowship
2. Fear - moving toward love - 1 John 4:18
3. Guilt - moving toward forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others
4. Shame - moving toward a fuller understanding that we are now new creations in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17
5. Blame - moving toward accepting responsibility for our choices and the consequences of those choices

In the rest of this topic, we will look at how to reverse the results of separation.

Ever since the original sin of Adam and Eve, all people have been separated from God by sin. That separation from God caused every person to look for one or more substitutes to fill the emptiness in their lives. However, these substitutes could never produce inner peace. As a result, people have continued to search for other substitutes. These substitutes have become the idols in their lives. In many cases these substitutes also lead to various forms of addiction.

The separation caused by sin means that mankind has no relationship with God. Sin also affects human relationships. Most human relationships are based on each person trying to get his or her own needs met rather than trying to meet the needs of others. This selfish attitude causes great human conflict. As a result, mankind experiences:

- Separation from God
- Conflicts with others

We want to help new Christians understand the fact that the moment they placed their trust in Christ they established a relationship with God. We need to help new Christians realize that we

become the sons of God - John 1:12. We need to help them understand that the Holy Spirit comes into our human spirit to testify that we are the children of God - Romans 8:14-16. We help the new Christian understand that we have become a part of those who will share the inheritance of God with Christ - Romans 8:17.

We also want to help them understand that when we placed our trust in Christ, we became a part of the family of God. This created a new relationship with all Christians as we were changed from strangers and foreigners to fellow citizens with other Christians - Ephesians 2:19. We need to help all Christians understand that they have become part of the family of God - Romans 8:14-17. This means that in addition to their relationship with God that they are also now related to all other Christians. Other Christians become a part of our family and we become a part of their family. This family relationship means that we start doing things together like having Bible study together, fellowshiping together, eating together and praying together - Acts 2:42, 46.

In addition to now having a relationship with God and with one another, we also need to begin to have fellowship with God and with one another. In order to help a new Christian understand, we have to help them clearly understand the difference between relationship and fellowship:

- * Relationship: is permanent and cannot be changed (once we are a part of the family of God we will never be removed from that family - Romans 8:35-39)
- * Fellowship: is what happens day-by-day and moment-by-moment as we relate to God and to other Christians - 1 John 1:3.

Just as we want to help new Christians understand their relationship with God and with other Christians, we also want to help them learn to enjoy the benefits of those relationships through fellowship. True fellowship happens as we yield ourselves to God - Romans 6:13-16. This results in:

- ♦ Fellowship with the Father - Romans 8:15
- ♦ Power from the Holy Spirit - Luke 24:49
- ♦ The love of Christ filling our lives - Ephesians 3:16-19

When we are walking in fellowship with God because we are yielding to God, we are actually walking in the light because God is light - 1 John 1:7. We will also experience fellowship with all other Christians who are yielding to God because they are also walking in the light. We need to help new Christians realize that only at those moments when they are yielding to God will they be walking in the light. One of the key things for new Christians to realize is that fellowship is something that they can enjoy seven days a week and not just when they are in a church building.

We want to help them realize that we are the church (the body of Christ and each of us are individual parts or members - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). In addition, we want to help them understand that our bodies are the real temple of Christ because the Holy Spirit now lives in our human spirit - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. During those times when we depend on ourselves, we can do no more than we did before we became Christians - John 15:5. During those times when we are yielding to God - Romans 6:13-16, we have the power of the Holy Spirit working in us so we are able to speak the Word of God with boldness - Acts 4:31 and the love of Christ flowing through us - John 13:34-35; Galatians 5:13-14, and that love becomes what motivates us - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians understand that their relationship with God and other Christians is permanent - Romans 8:35-39 and that they can enjoy fellowship with God and other Christians at all times when they are yielding themselves to God - Romans 6:13-16.

3. Learning to Move from Fear to Love

In our last topic, we began to talk about helping the new Christian reverse the effects of original sin. We saw that a person changes his or her relationship with God at the moment he becomes a Christian and experiences the practical benefits of that relationship as he learns to experience fellowship with God. Today, we will be learning how to help a new Christian begin to change within. In Genesis 3:7-13, we see that Adam had fear, guilt and shame within as a result of sin. That fear, guilt and shame is what has motivated every person since Adam and Eve.

The first change within is learning to move from fear to love. 1 John 4:18 says, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love." Peter was bold as a lion when he was standing next to Christ. This was why he took off the ear of the servant of the high priest when they came to arrest Christ. However, when Peter followed afar off and depended on his own strength, he was totally controlled by fear when a young servant girl asked him if he was also one of Christ's disciples and he denied Christ. As a result, we see that we will only act out of love when we are yielding to Christ instead of depending on our own strength.

In the New Testament we learn about four roots that can have a dramatic effect on people. These are:

1. having a root of the love of money - 1 Timothy 6:10
2. having a root of bitterness - Hebrews 12:15
3. taking root in Christ - Colossians 2:6-7
4. taking root in the love of Christ - Ephesians 3:16-19

Many people have taken root in the love of money or have a root of bitterness at the time they become Christians. Since Colossians 3:5 says that covetousness is idolatry, a person who has a love of money is actually an idol worshiper. His idols are money and the things that he can get with money. This will only increase his fear because he becomes controlled by the thought of getting more money or losing what he already has. A person who has become bitter is defiled and defiles others. As a result, his relationships with other people produce an increasing fear. These fears are in addition to the normal fears that everyone has because of sin.

We need to be aware that we may have to help new Christians deal with these roots in order for them to begin healthy spiritual growth. In fact, these roots are what prevent many Christians from growing beyond the spiritual toddler stage. They often lead directly to the envying, strife and divisions mentioned in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3.

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." In these verses, we see five things we do to help new Christians learn to take root in Christ. These are:

1. We take time to show them how to walk in Christ
2. We take time to help them learn to take root in Christ
3. We take time to help them learn to be built up in Christ
4. We take time to help them become established in the faith
5. We take time to help them learn to become thankful

Notice three key words in these five things: time, show, and help. The person who is a new Christian will not automatically learn to do these things. He must be shown by the example of someone who is walking in the love of Christ. That requires someone spending much time with the new Christian so that the new Christian can see how a person functions in many different situations as he walks in the love of Christ. Just like a physical new born, the new Christian needs lots of help

learning to take root in Christ, being built up in Christ, becoming established in the faith and learning to become thankful.

In Ephesians 3:16-19 we read, “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.” From these verses we see that new Christians need to learn to take root in the love of Christ as well as taking root in Christ. This happens as we begin to help them understand the following:

- the greatness of the love of Christ - 1 John 4:7-10
- the fact that Christ will always deal with Christians in love because the barrier of sin has been removed - 1 John 2:1-2
- the difference between worldly love (satisfying self), family love (great care and concern but sometimes conditional), and Christ’s love (demonstrated by His self-sacrifice for our sake) from which we can never be separated - Romans 8:35-39

We also want to help new Christians learn to act out of love as well as learning to take root in Christ and His love. Before we became Christians, our human spirit was separated from the Holy Spirit so our decisions always went through the changed relationship that we had within ourselves because of sin (fear, guilt and shame). That meant that because we could only depend on ourselves, we acted out of fear rather than love.

Now that the Holy Spirit has come into our human spirit, we have a choice. We can depend on ourselves and act out of fear as we did before we became a Christian or we can yield to the Holy Spirit and act out of love. In fact, we have to make that choice several hundred times every day. As we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit more frequently, we will be moving from fear toward love. We:

- Act out of fear when we depend on our own strength (Romans 7:14-25)
- Act out of love when we present ourselves to God (Romans 6:13, 16) and yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-39)

As we show the new Christian the choices that he or she has from the Word of God, and model those choices by our own example, the new Christian will learn to follow our example (1 Thessalonians 1:6) as we yield to God. As a result, he will experience more and more the power of the Holy Spirit working in him and the love of Christ flowing through him.

One of the key things to understand about the love of Christ is that it is caught not taught. It was only after He had walked with the disciples for three years that Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Christ had shown the disciples how to love rather than just telling them to love. This love is not even possible in our own strength. This love only happens when we are yielding to Christ so that His love is flowing through us. May the Lord richly bless you as you show new Christians how to love rather than just telling them to love.

4. Learning to Move from Guilt to Forgiveness

In our last topic, we talked about helping a new Christian begin to learn to move from fear to love. We saw that Christians will act out of fear when they depend on their own strength and they can act out of love at those times when they yield to the Holy Spirit so that the power of the Holy Spirit is working in them and the love of Christ is flowing through them.

The Christian who is depending on his own strength will act out of fear but he will act out of love when he yields to the Holy Spirit. In addition to acting out of fear, the Christian will also act out of guilt and shame when he or she is depending on his or her own strength. Today, we will be talking about how to help the new Christian learn to move from guilt to forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others.

Many people who have been Christians for a long time still continue to have their lives controlled by guilt. Sometimes this guilt is genuine and sometimes it is false guilt. However, either way it still continues to control how they think and act. That is why it is so important to help the new Christian learn to deal with guilt as soon as possible after he becomes a Christian. There are three key words to help a Christian learn to deal with guilt:

- ◆ forgiveness
- ◆ cleansing
- ◆ forgiving others

First, we need to help the new Christian understand what happened to his sins the moment he became a Christian. 1 John 2:12 says, “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.” One evidence that a Christian is growing is the fact that, as a spiritual child, he knows his sins are forgiven. This is never said of the spiritual newborn or the spiritual toddler. Many Christians never reach the point where they understand that their sins of the past, their sins that they commit today and all of the sins that they will ever commit in the future were paid for by Christ on the cross and that the Father has forgiven them for Christ’s sake - Ephesians 4:32. The new Christian needs to understand that God did the following things with their sins at the moment of salvation:

- God removed them as far as the east is from the west - Psalm 103:12
- God cast our sins into the depths of the sea - Micah 7:19
- God blotted out our transgressions for His own sake - Isaiah 43:25
- God chose to remember our sins (hold them against us) no more - Hebrews 10:17-18

I have found it helpful to give a visual word picture to illustrate each of these four points and to help impress them into the mind of the new Christian:

1. Ask, how long does a satellite travel east around the earth until it starts going west? (Aren’t you glad God did not say as far as the north is from the south?)
2. If I take a boat ten miles out into the ocean, lean over the side and drop a handful of rice into the ocean, can I get that rice back?
3. Why would God blot out our sins for His own sake?
4. What is the difference between forgetting our sins and choosing to hold our sins against us no more?

The new Christian needs to reach the point where he understands that God has forgiven his sins and will never hold those sins against the Christian in the future.

Second, the new Christian needs to understand the importance of daily cleansing. Christ used a very important illustration in John 13:10 to help Christians understand the need for daily cleansing from sins we commit day-by-day. “Jesus said to him, He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” Christ compares our salvation

to a bath that has removed our sin. However, we continue to commit other sins daily and we need to confess those sins daily so that we experience daily cleansing from the guilt of sin. When we confess our sins, Christ gives us the following promise in 1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We see that when we confess our sins,

Christ:

- is faithful - He will always respond to us
- is just - He is doing right since He paid for our sins

Christ:

- forgives - He lets our sins go and does not hold them against us
- cleanses - He takes away the guilt so that our conscience is clear

Most new Christians need to have it explained to them that when they sin again they will definitely feel guilt, because their conscience was renewed at the time they placed their trust in Christ. However, they need to have it clearly explained that the purpose of guilt is not to burden them down but rather to remind them to confess their sins, so that they can experience the cleansing that Christ promises. We need to help them understand that confession of sin is like a spiritual foot washing. We confess our sins and God causes us to feel clean in our inner person. Two things happen:

- ♦ We confess our sins
- ♦ God cleanses our hearts

Many new Christians need to realize that they can confess sin immediately so that they do not have to continue to live with the burden of guilt. They also need to realize that they can confess many times throughout the day.

Third, the new Christian needs to understand the importance of learning to forgive others if he wants to be free from guilt. Forgiving others is not a natural response for us. It is only as we realize that we are forgiven that we have a desire to forgive others. Then we see that we will only forgive others as we depend on the strength of Christ to forgive instead of our own strength. In Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13 we see two reasons why we are to forgive:

- * God forgave us because we are in Christ
- * Christ forgave us and we are to follow His example

However, many people say that they could never forgive. That may have been true before they became Christians but it is no longer true for us as Christians. Without Christ we had no desire and no power to forgive. The fact that God forgave us and Christ forgave us should give us the desire to forgive. However, many Christians say that they have a desire to forgive but no power to forgive. The following four verses teach us how to receive the power to forgive - John 15:5; Luke 24:49; Romans 6:16; Philippians 4:13. Those verses teach us the following:

- ♦ We are powerless to forgive in our own strength
- ♦ We have been given power by the Holy Spirit
- ♦ We have that power as we yield to God in obedience
- ♦ We are able to forgive through Christ's strength

Many times, I tell Christians that they are right when they say they cannot forgive. I tell them that is true because they are depending on their own strength. The next thing they tell me is that they are not ready to forgive. I agree that they are right, and point out from Ephesians 4:32 that the only reason God forgave them was for Christ's sake. Then I tell them, you may not be ready to forgive today, but when you are ready to forgive, whether that is tomorrow, next week, next month, or next year, here is what you do when God convicts you of the need to forgive:

- Pray and ask the Father to give you the willingness that He had to forgive you for Christ's sake - Ephesians 4:32

- Pray and yield your spirit to the Holy Spirit so that you are depending on His power and not your own to forgive - Romans 6:13, 16
- Pray and ask Christ to give you His strength to forgive and let go of the things you are holding against the other person - John 15:5; Philippians 4:13

As new Christians begin to understand that God has forgiven them for Christ's sake, that Christ is cleansing them as they confess their sins to Him moment-by-moment, and that the Holy Spirit is giving them the power to forgive others, they will begin to experience more and more joy in their daily lives because they are experiencing guilt with decreasing frequency. They will find that they are able to use this new freedom in Christ to serve one another in love as 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." May the Lord richly bless you as you model for new Christians the joy we can experience and help them to experience that joy as guilt is changed in our lives through forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others.

5. Learning to Move from Shame to Self-Acceptance

In our last two topics, we have talked about the changes that begin to happen within us once we place our trust in Christ. We saw that Christ wants to help us begin to move from fear to love. He also wants us to move from guilt to forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others. Today, we are going to focus on how we move from shame to self-acceptance.

When Adam sinned, he immediately experienced shame because he was naked before God. Instead of dealing with his shame before God, Adam tried to deal with his outward appearance by covering himself with fig leaves. Ever since that time people have focused on their outward appearance as they have tried to deal with their inadequacy and shame. As a result, people focus on the fact that they are too short, too tall, too thin, too fat, their nose is too big or too small or many other things about their outward appearance. By focusing on these things, they fail to deal with their appearance before God as sinners and forget that God looks on the heart.

One of the greatest verses for new Christians to learn and understand to help them begin to reverse the effects of shame is 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” What a privilege to know that Christ does not just patch up the old person but instead He recreates us as new persons. In this verse we see that Christ did three things for us at the moment of salvation:

- Christ made us a new creation
- Christ said that the old has passed away
- Christ said that the new has come

By making us a new creation, Christ changed us on the inside. We are given a new nature and have been set free. With our new nature we are now free to make choices again. We can choose to sin but we can also choose to ask Christ to give us His strength to do what is right. 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.” We are now free to serve one another in love.

Christ also says that the old has passed away. Once Adam sinned he received a yoke of bondage and became a slave to sin. Galatians 5:1 tells us, “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 Galatians had turned back to the law to try and help them live their new lives in Christ. In turning to the law, they had again become entangled in a yoke of bondage. The law can never make a person do right because that is not the purpose of any law. A law only shows a person when he has done wrong. Galatians 3:24-25 tell us that the law was our tutor or schoolmaster to bring us to Christ but once we came to Christ we are no longer under the tutor. To turn back to the law to help us in our spiritual growth is to turn back to bondage.

Christ then says that the new has come. The new is best understood through the new commandment that Christ gave to the disciples and us in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The new means that we have been set free to love as Christ loved as we abide in Him (John 15:5) and yield to Him (Romans 6:13, 16). The more we learn to yield to Christ, the less shame we feel because we are no longer focusing on ourselves. Instead we are focusing on the new life that Christ has given us which makes us free to serve one another in love. We begin to realize as Philippians 4:13 tells us, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Because the things that we are doing we are doing through Christ, we do not experience shame because we know that we are pleasing Christ.

This in turn helps us to realize how we are able to do what we do. 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 tells us,

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ We do not need to focus on ourselves any longer - a new focus
- ◆ We can realize that our sufficiency is from God - a new sufficiency
- ◆ We can realize that God has made us adequate - a new adequacy
- ◆ We can be effective ministers of the new covenant - a new ministry
- ◆ We have been given true life by the Spirit - a new life

Many Christians have not understood and applied these principles so they are still controlled by shame. Other Christians are still controlled by shame because they are living with unconfessed sin. They have hidden their sins from others but they have not hidden their sins from God. Proverbs 28:13 tells us, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.” The person who tries to cover his sins will not prosper because his fear, guilt and shame are destroying him from within. The true remedy for dealing with our sins is given in this verse:

- We are to confess our sin
- We are to forsake our sin

Instead of confessing and forsaking our sin, a common way that Christians deal with their shame is by trying to become busy with Christian activities with the hope that the busyness will cause the shame to go away. The problem that we face if we try this approach is that the shame is still there when we finish our activities because the activities have been substituted for confessing and forsaking the sin. Instead we need to focus on renewing the inner man by confessing and forsaking sin. 2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.”

When we focus on renewing the inner man each day as we spend time in prayer and confession, we are then able to work out what is happening in our lives. Then our activities have meaning and purpose instead of just being busyness to help us forget our shame. Philippians 2:12-16 tell us, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” As we renew our inner man day-by-day, these verses tell us that:

- * We will work out what is happening in us
- * We will do all things without complaining and disputing
- * We will shine as lights in the world

As we help new Christians learn to deal with their shame in a Biblical way, their lives will begin to have real purpose as they see Christ work in and through their lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians learn what it means to be a new creation in Christ.

6. Learning to Reverse Blame

In our last several topics, we have focused on helping the new Christian learn to reverse the effects of original sin. Sin changed man's relationship with God: There was separation. Separation can be reversed as people restore that relationship by placing their trust in Christ and learning to walk in fellowship with Christ.

Sin changed man's relationship with himself as Adam immediately experienced:

Fear

- Fear will be replaced by love as we learn to take root in the love of Christ

Guilt

- Guilt will be replaced as we learn to experience forgiveness and cleansing and learn to forgive others

Shame

- Shame will be replaced by self-acceptance as we begin to live as new creations in Christ who realize that our sufficiency is from Christ because He is renewing our inward man day-by-day and giving us an outward ministry to others

Sin also changed our relationship with others:

Instead of unity in the family, Adam immediately began to blame God for the wife God had given him and blame his wife because she gave him the fruit. Today, we are going to learn how to help the new Christian begin to learn to take responsibility for his own choices and the results (consequences) of those choices, both the good choices and the wrong choices.

At the moment we placed our trust in Christ, sin lost its dominion (power) over us. Romans 6:9 and 6:14 tell us, "Knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him...For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace." In these two verses, we see the following:

1. Christ defeated death when He rose from the dead
2. Christ defeated the power of sin over our lives and placed us under grace

However, new Christians do not yet know that Christ defeated death and the power of sin over our lives and placed us under grace at the moment of salvation. That is why we need to help them understand that at the moment we placed our trust in Christ, sin lost its power over us because we are now in Christ. We are now under grace instead of sin and we are now free to make right choices. When we as Christians sin, it is because we are depending on ourselves instead of yielding to the Lord. As a result, we now have the freedom and power to make the choice whether we will depend on ourselves or whether we will yield to Christ. Once we begin to fully understand this, we realize that we can no longer blame others for our choices because we now have the power to make right choices.

In fact, we begin to realize that sin now happens when we depend on our own strength. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 tell us, "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*." These verses tell us that we now have two choices every time that we are tempted to sin. We can make either one of the following choices:

1. We can depend on our own strength — we will fall and commit sin
2. We can yield to a faithful God — He will make a way of escape

One thing that we need to remember and teach the new Christian is the fact that since we are now free to make our choices, just as Adam was free to make his choices before he sinned, we will also

reap the consequences of our choices. If we depend on our own strength, we will sin and reap the consequence of that sin. If we yield to God, he will make a way of escape and we will reap the good consequence of that obedience. Galatians 6:7-9 tell us, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart."

It is one thing to realize that we can now make right choices. However, the thing that is even more exciting is that now we have the power to carry out those choices. That power is not our own power. Instead that power is the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives to give us the power to carry out the choices that we have made. A person who is a new Christian has probably made resolutions many times but never had the power to carry out those resolutions. That is why it is important to help him understand he will only be able to carry out right choices as he depends on the power of the Holy Spirit working in his life.

In Romans 6:13 and 16, we see that we are to yield to God.

In Romans 7:14-25, we see what happens when we do not yield but depend on our own strength instead. In those verses, we see that the words I, me, my and myself are used 37 times ("I" trouble, not eye trouble). The summary of depending on ourselves is given in verse 24 where we read, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

In Romans 8, we see what happens when we yield to God and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit. In the first seven chapters of Romans, the Holy Spirit is mentioned four times. In chapter 8, the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times. The summary of yielding to the Holy Spirit is given in Romans 8:37-39, where we read, "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."

We see at least three important things happen as we yield to God:

1. We are able to make wise choices as we yield to God - Isaiah 55:8-9

"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."

In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ the thoughts of God are higher than our thoughts
- ◆ the ways of God are higher than our ways.

2. We are able to put on the new man as we yield to God - Colossians 3:9-14

"Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new *man* who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave *nor* free, but Christ *is* all and in all. Therefore, as *the* elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also *must do*. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection."

- The new man is renewed in knowledge
- The new man is able to show proper attitudes toward others
- The new man is able to act out of love

3. We have the power to carry out wise choices as we yield to God - Luke 24:49

"Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are

endued with power from on high.” In this verse we see that we must depend on power from on high if we are going to have the power to carry out wise choices.

As the new Christian begins to understand these principles, he will realize that he no longer needs to blame others for his failures and sins. If he sins, he can confess those sins to someone who loves him with a perfect love and he will be forgiven and cleansed (1 John 1:9). At the same time, he will realize that he now does have the power to make wise choices as he yields to the Lord and carries out those choices in the power of the Holy Spirit. May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians begin to reverse the effects of original sin.

7. Foundations to Help Us Develop Healthy Christians

God called us to “Make Disciples.” The various forms of the word disciple are used two hundred and seventy-four times in the New Testament:

matheteuo - to make disciples - used 4 times including Matthew 28:19-20

mathetes - a disciple used two hundred sixty-eight times

mathetria - a female disciple used one time

summathetes – fellow disciples used one time

However, the two hundred seventy-fourth time comes in Acts 21:16 and the word is never used in the New Testament after that point. Since the command to “Make Disciples” is our Great Commission, we need to first examine why this word is never used in the rest of the New Testament.

There were at least two different systems of teaching in the New Testament world. The main system, known by the Gentile world, was the Greek system of teaching. The Greek system of teaching has been adopted today by most of the industrialized nations of the world. The Greek system of teaching is based on telling (and punishing those who cannot repeat back by using severe discipline - we fail those who cannot repeat back) and has been adopted almost universally in our school systems at all levels.

In contrast, the Hebrew system of teaching is based on showing rather than telling. The best illustration of the Hebrew system of teaching is the way Christ made disciples. Christ gave the disciples Four Calls and a Commission, and together, those calls and commission illustrate the process of making disciples.

Call One - Come and See - John 1:39-46, Matthew 9:9-10, Mark 1:30-33

This call came when Christ first met the disciples (or anyone) and was a call inviting people to spend time with Him and get acquainted and even go places with him like weddings - John 2:1-12, to Jerusalem - John 2:13-3:36, through Samaria - John 4. The disciples just went along with Christ and observed what He did and taught. During this period, Christ did and the disciples observed. This provided many opportunities to see Christ lead by love. This period lasted for about a year and was an open invitation to all.

Call Two - Come and Grow - Mark 1:16-20

This call came after the disciples had already been observing Christ for about a year and lasted for an additional nine months. During this period, Christ invited the disciples to learn how to become fishers of men by observing Him. He took them with Him as He went and preached throughout the two hundred and three towns and villages of Galilee. The disciples went along with Christ and observed what He did and taught. They also began to participate. Throughout this period, the group who observed and participated was larger than just the twelve, because it was open to all.

Call Three - Come and Serve - Mark 3:13-15, Luke 6:12-16

This call came after the disciples had been observing Christ for about twenty-one months. This call came after Christ had spent an entire night in prayer - Luke 6:12-13. Christ chose the twelve that:

- ♦ They might be with Him
- ♦ He might send them forth to preach
- ♦ To have authority to heal sicknesses and cast out demons

During this period, Christ was now sending the disciples out to do, while Christ was there to observe and encourage. In Matthew 10:1-42, Mark 6:7-13, and Luke 9:1-6, Christ sent out the twelve with very specific instructions about how they were to go, what they were to say and what they were to do. In Mark 6:30-31, and Luke 9:10, the disciples came and reported to Christ all that they had done and taught. Later, in Luke 10:1-12, Christ sent out the seventy which would have included the twelve again with some very specific instructions about what to say and what to do.

Then, in Luke 10:17-20, they came back and reported to Christ what they had said and done and what had happened. This period lasted for about twenty-one months (about the same length of time as the first two calls combined) and Christ spent much time giving further instruction and showing them how to minister.

Call Four - Come and Shepherd - John 20:21, John 21:15-17

This call came after the resurrection and the disciples were asked to feed and shepherd the flock just as Christ had fed and shepherded them for three-and-a-half years. This time, they would be doing and Christ would be serving them in love (Mark 10:42-45 and John 15:1-8) even though He would not be present. They were to wait until they were endued with power from on high. (Luke 24:49) Once they received that power, they were to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The Commission - As you are going, Make Disciples - Matthew 28:19-20

This commission also came after the resurrection and shortly before Christ returned to heaven. Christ was now sending them out to Make Disciples just as He had made disciples of them. Matthew 28:19-20 gives one command with three participles telling them how to carry out that command:

The command - Make Disciples

- going - they were not to wait for people to come to them
- baptizing - they were to help those who believed identify with Christ and His body, the church
- teaching them to obey all things - just as they had been shown how to obey by Christ, now they were to show others how to obey

The disciples had been shown how to obey by Christ, and now, they were to Make Disciples by showing others how to obey. The Jews understood that was how you made disciples, because that was the way not only Christ, but the Pharisees and other Jewish groups made disciples. The problem was that the Pharisees made their disciples just like themselves. Matthew 23:15 says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." The Hebrew system of teaching and learning was based on showing, having people participate, having people do, having people report what they had done, and then discussing what they had learned together.

However, we mentioned that the Greek system of teaching was based on telling and severe discipline. This is illustrated in 1 Corinthians 4:15-16 where Paul said they had ten thousand instructors - the slave who told a child and then exercised severe discipline if the child failed to learn - but not many fathers. The same word is used two more times in the New Testament, in Galatians 3:24-25, where we see that the law was our tutor or schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, but once we come to Christ we are no longer under the schoolmaster. (The original instructor was a slave by the name of Mentor who was appointed by Odysseus to raise his son while he went off to war for twenty years.) That became the Greek model for teaching.

Because the Greek model was lacking - the focus was on telling and exercising severe discipline - Christ came and provided a totally different model - the focus was on showing and loving. That is why the disciples could easily understand the new commandment that Christ gave in John 13:34-35 the night before He was crucified, "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 disciples knew how to make disciples by showing and loving because that is the way that Christ had developed them as disciples. They were able to repeat that in the Jewish culture because that was the way the Jews developed disciples. However, that was not understood in the Gentile world because the model they had was the Greek model of telling and severe discipline.

As a result, once we get past Acts 21:16, the word disciple is no longer used. Instead, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 4:15-16, Paul used the model of a loving father and encouraged the Corinthians to imitate him. Paul used this same model in 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 where Paul, Silas, and Timothy had shown the care of a loving mother (verses 7-9) and provided the example of a godly father (verses 10-12). In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul said, "Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ." In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul told Timothy to, "Be an example to the believers." In Titus 2, Paul told Titus to share with the older men and women how to teach the younger men and women by example and then told Titus to be an example himself in verses 7 and 8. In Acts 20:20-21 and 35, Paul told the leaders at Ephesus that he had equipped them for ministry by showing them.

Just as physical children learn by imitating those around them, new Christians learn to live the Christian life by imitating those Christians that they spend time with and see their examples. You will have a much greater impact on the lives of new Christians as you take them with you in a wide variety of situations than you will have in sermons where you tell them what to do. They will see your heart and passion for the lost as you take them with you as you share the Gospel in the homes of non-Christians. They will see how to encourage a discouraged brother as you take them with you as you go to encourage others. The Christian life and godly living is primarily caught not taught. May the Lord richly bless you as you spend time with new Christians so that they can learn to imitate you just as you imitate Christ.

8. Helping New Christians and Toddlers Begin Healthy Growth

When a physical baby is first born, that child does not know what it needs for healthy growth. The same is true for a new Christian and for Christians who have not grown properly. There are many comparisons between physical and spiritual growth. We have all seen Christians who did not grow properly and they are still very self-centered even though they have been Christians for many years. They will remain self-centered unless a more mature Christian becomes a spiritual parent to them. As we saw in our last topic, in Corinth they had many instructors but not many fathers - 1 Corinthians 4:15-17.

The great need of every new Christian is spiritual parents. For children who grow up in Christian homes, sometimes their physical parents also become their spiritual parents. However, for someone who becomes a Christian as an adult or is the first generation in their family to become a Christian, healthy growth will usually not happen unless there are spiritual parents to follow. In 1 Thessalonians 1:6, Paul, Silas and Timothy said to the Thessalonians, "And you became followers of us and of the Lord..."

New Christians, and Christians who have not experienced healthy spiritual growth, need spiritual parents who will provide them with at least three things:

First, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need love. 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 says, "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." Paul, Silas and Timothy had provided the tender and loving care that a nursing mother provides for her newborn children.

Second, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need an example to follow. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, "Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ." Paul had said the same thing earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:16 when he said, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me." Then Paul, Silas and Timothy spoke about the fact that they had given the Thessalonians an example to follow in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." The early church leaders realized the importance of giving new Christians an example to follow.

Third, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need food to help them in their spiritual growth. However, many new Christians find it very difficult to understand the Bible. For that reason they need spiritual parents who will explain the Bible to them and answer their questions. Aquila and Priscilla give us a beautiful example of this in Acts 18:26, "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Aquila and Priscilla had been given an example by Paul as he spent time with them and answered their questions (see Acts 18:1-3) and so they heard Apollos and immediately recognized that he needed a spiritual parent to help him come to an accurate understanding of Christ. Instead of waiting for Paul to return to Ephesus, they immediately took the responsibility to become spiritual parents to Apollos. The Lord wants each one of us to become spiritual parents like Aquila and Priscilla as we grow in our own spiritual lives.

Three needs of new Christians and spiritual toddlers to become healthy Christians:

Love

Example

Spiritual Food

In order to understand and help a new Christian or a spiritual toddler, we need to look at a Biblical profile of both the spiritual newborn and the spiritual toddler. True spiritual birth will always produce at least three characteristics in the newborn Christian. These are:

- the spiritual newborn has an attitude of repentance toward God - Acts 20:21
- the spiritual newborn has an attitude of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ - Acts 20:21
- the spiritual newborn gives evidence of possessing new life - 2 Corinthians 5:17

The fact that the conscience of a person has been renewed will often cause a new Christian to feel that he is even more sinful than he used to be. If you ask him if he has started committing new sins, he will often say, “No, I am not committing new sins but things that never used to bother me now bother me.” I assure the new Christian that his conscience is now working properly so that he can confess those sins and be forgiven and cleansed - 1 John 1:9.

When men sinned and turned away from God, Romans 1:19-32 tell us how spiritual darkness took control of their lives. Those verses show us the downward progression into darkness. The exact reverse will happen as we help newborn Christians begin to learn to walk in the light. Those reversed effects will produce the following reverses. There will be:

- A new view of God’s creation - 19-20
- A new attitude of thankfulness - 21a
- A renewed conscience - 21b
- A hunger for godly wisdom - 22
- A new sensitivity to the spiritual needs of others - 23
- A new desire to worship and serve the Creator - 24-25
- A new desire for godly living - 26-27
- A new desire to transform their thoughts and actions - 28-31
- A new desire to please God - 32

However, if a new Christian does not have a spiritual parent to help him learn how to put these new desires and attitudes into practice, his growth will stop and he will become a spiritual toddler. He will begin to view the Christian life as it is defined in Romans 7:14-25 where we see what happens when we try to live the Christian life in our own strength. The result will be that the person will develop the profile of a spiritual toddler described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14. Those verses give the following description of a spiritual toddler:

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

Just as the physical toddler is very self-centered and selfish, the spiritual toddler is also self-centered and selfish. His focus is on My needs and My problems. In the physical life, a healthy child learns to grow beyond that self-centered focus and begins to think about others. The same should happen in the spiritual life. However, many Christians never get beyond this stage. Just like the newborn babe, in order to experience healthy growth, the spiritual toddler needs spiritual parents to help him in his spiritual growth. Hebrews 5:12 defines two key needs of the spiritual toddler when it says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid

food.” In this verse, we see that a spiritual toddler needs:

1. a spiritual parent to help him grow - love
2. the milk of the Word - food

Paul adds a third thing in 1 Corinthians 4:16, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me.”

3. a mature Christian to imitate - example

As you notice the needs of a new Christian and a spiritual toddler are the same. Both need a spiritual parent who will provide him with:

Love

Food

Example

Just as Paul said to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 4:15, we also have a lot of instructors but few spiritual parents. This produces a lot of spiritual toddlers who never grow beyond that point in their spiritual lives. As spiritual leaders we need to ask ourselves the question, “Who are my spiritual children that I pray for each day and spend time with each week to help them in their growth toward spiritual maturity?” May the Lord richly bless you as you serve as a spiritual parent to one or a few new Christians who need the love and example of a mature Christian to follow and who is helping them to answer their questions by helping them to find the answers to their questions from the Word of God.

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First, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need love. 1 Thessalonians 1:7-8 says, "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." Paul, Silas and Timothy had provided the tender and loving care that a nursing mother provides for her newborn children.

Second, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need an example to follow. 1 Corinthians 11:1 says, "Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ." Paul had said the same thing earlier in 1 Corinthians 4:16 when he said, "Therefore I urge you, imitate me." Then Paul, Silas and Timothy spoke about the fact that they had given the Thessalonians an example to follow in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." The early church leaders realized the importance of giving new Christians an example to follow.

Third, new Christians and spiritual toddlers need food to help them in their spiritual growth. However, many new Christians find it very difficult to understand the Bible. For that reason they need spiritual parents who will explain the Bible to them and answer their questions. Aquila and Priscilla give us a beautiful example of this in Acts 18:26, "So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Aquila and Priscilla had been given an example by Paul as he spent time with them and answered their questions (see Acts 18:1-3) and so they heard Apollos and immediately recognized that he needed a spiritual parent to help him come to an accurate understanding of Christ. Instead of waiting for Paul to return to Ephesus, they immediately took the responsibility to become spiritual parents to Apollos. The Lord wants each one of us to become spiritual parents like Aquila and Priscilla as we grow in our own spiritual lives.

Three needs of new Christians and spiritual toddlers to become healthy Christians:

Love

Example

Spiritual Food

In order to understand and help a new Christian or a spiritual toddler, we need to look at a Biblical profile of both the spiritual newborn and the spiritual toddler. True spiritual birth will always produce at least three characteristics in the newborn Christian. These are:

- the spiritual newborn has an attitude of repentance toward God - Acts 20:21
- the spiritual newborn has an attitude of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ - Acts 20:21
- the spiritual newborn gives evidence of possessing new life - 2 Corinthians 5:17

The fact that the conscience of a person has been renewed will often cause a new Christian to feel that he is even more sinful than he used to be. If you ask him if he has started committing new sins, he will often say, “No, I am not committing new sins but things that never used to bother me now bother me.” I assure the new Christian that his conscience is now working properly so that he can confess those sins and be forgiven and cleansed - 1 John 1:9.

When men sinned and turned away from God, Romans 1:19-32 tell us how spiritual darkness took control of their lives. Those verses show us the downward progression into darkness. The exact reverse will happen as we help newborn Christians begin to learn to walk in the light. Those reversed effects will produce the following reverses. There will be:

- A new view of God’s creation - 19-20
- A new attitude of thankfulness - 21a
- A renewed conscience - 21b
- A hunger for godly wisdom - 22
- A new sensitivity to the spiritual needs of others - 23
- A new desire to worship and serve the Creator - 24-25
- A new desire for godly living - 26-27
- A new desire to transform their thoughts and actions - 28-31
- A new desire to please God - 32

However, if a new Christian does not have a spiritual parent to help him learn how to put these new desires and attitudes into practice, his growth will stop and he will become a spiritual toddler. He will begin to view the Christian life as it is defined in Romans 7:14-25 where we see what happens when we try to live the Christian life in our own strength. The result will be that the person will develop the profile of a spiritual toddler described in 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, 13:11; Ephesians 4:14 and Hebrews 5:11-14. Those verses give the following description of a spiritual toddler:

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

Just as the physical toddler is very self-centered and selfish, the spiritual toddler is also self-centered and selfish. His focus is on My needs and My problems. In the physical life, a healthy child learns to grow beyond that self-centered focus and begins to think about others. The same should happen in the spiritual life. However, many Christians never get beyond this stage. Just like the newborn babe, in order to experience healthy growth, the spiritual toddler needs spiritual parents to help him in his spiritual growth. Hebrews 5:12 defines two key needs of the spiritual toddler when it says, “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid

food.” In this verse, we see that a spiritual toddler needs:

1. a spiritual parent to help him grow - love
2. the milk of the Word - food

Paul adds a third thing in 1 Corinthians 4:16, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me.”

3. a mature Christian to imitate - example

As you notice the needs of a new Christian and a spiritual toddler are the same. Both need a spiritual parent who will provide him with:

Love

Food

Example

Just as Paul said to the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 4:15, we also have a lot of instructors but few spiritual parents. This produces a lot of spiritual toddlers who never grow beyond that point in their spiritual lives. As spiritual leaders we need to ask ourselves the question, “Who are my spiritual children that I pray for each day and spend time with each week to help them in their growth toward spiritual maturity?” May the Lord richly bless you as you serve as a spiritual parent to one or a few new Christians who need the love and example of a mature Christian to follow and who is helping them to answer their questions by helping them to find the answers to their questions from the Word of God.

10. Helping Spiritual Parents Continue Healthy Spiritual Growth

In our last two topics, we have seen how we help a new Christian grow and develop in his or her spiritual life. We have seen that spiritual sons and daughters go through a similar process of development as physical sons and daughters. In our topic today, we will see how a spiritual parent helps a growing Christian become an “adult son” and a partner in ministry. The result of healthy growth is usually reproduction of our lives in the lives of others, because we are able to say as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.” Of course, that also implies that we are growing and learning more and more to imitate Christ.

1 John 2:12-14 points out one key characteristic of a spiritual parent, “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 see, in these verses, that the characteristic of a spiritual parent is repeated twice. A spiritual parent has:

Known Him that is from the beginning.

- * The spiritual child has: Known the Father
- * The spiritual young man has: The Word of God abiding in him
- * The spiritual parent has: Known Him that is from the beginning

We talked about the words. “relationship” and “fellowship” in some earlier topics. 1 John 1:3-4 says, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” In these verses, we see that John wanted those who received this letter to enjoy fellowship with both the Father and the Son as a regular part of their lives. In addition, we see that such a Christian will also be enjoying regular fellowship with other Christians. In 1 John 1:7, we see that, “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.” True fellowship only happens as we learn to:

- Walk in the light as He is in the light
- Experience daily cleansing from sin

A second characteristic of a spiritual parent is implied by the word parent. It is impossible to be a parent without having one or more children. A person may think that he is being a spiritual parent, because he preaches to a large crowd of people. One simple question we need to ask is, “How many of you became physical parents because you spoke to large crowds of people?” In Mark 3:13-14, we see that the first reason why Christ chose the twelve was so that “they might be with Him”. Then, as Christ came to the end of His ministry He said, in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Christ chose the twelve so they might be with Him, with the result that they knew that He really loved them as individuals.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, we see three key needs of a spiritual parent, “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. You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among

you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” In these verses, we see that spiritual parents:

1. Need to continue to grow in their ability to love
2. Need to continue to grow in the sharing of their lives
3. Need to continue to grow in their godly example to spiritual children

As people become faithful spiritual parents, God continues to increase their opportunities for ministry. This provides the opportunity for you to help them continue to develop and become spiritual Timothy's. In Acts 16:1-3, we see two key things about the ministry of Timothy before he was chosen by Paul to go with him as a part of the ministry team, “Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, *the* son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father *was* Greek. He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium. Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.” Two characteristics of a Timothy are found in this passage:

- * He already had a good report of other Christians
- * He already had an effective ministry to other Christians

Lystra was about eighteen miles from Iconium, and Derbe was about forty miles the opposite direction. The fact that all three of these cities are mentioned in relation to the good report about Timothy show that he was already reaching out beyond his own city to help others develop in their spiritual lives. As a result, a spiritual Timothy is a maturing Christian who we adopt as a spiritual son to help him develop a wider and more effective ministry. He may still be a spiritual young man or he may already be a spiritual parent. However, he is a growing Christian who has the potential for a much greater ministry if he can spend time with a mature spiritual leader to learn from his example.

A second thing we notice about Timothy is that he came from a family that was multi-cultural - his mother was a Jew and his father was a Greek. If the Lord happens to lead us to a maturing Christian who already has a multi-cultural background, we will see that such a person has already been prepared to develop a ministry to a variety of cultures and ethnic groups. As a result, that individual will have the potential to effectively develop other leaders in various cultures.

A third thing that we see about Timothy, in 2 Timothy 1:5, is that both his mother and grandmother had a true faith in Christ but nothing is mentioned about the faith of his father. Whether this was due to the fact that his father was not a believer or had died when Timothy was quite young, we do not know. However, whichever was the case, Timothy grew up with the godly spiritual influences all coming from his mother's side of the family. This also meant that Timothy understood those who lacked the spiritual influence of a godly father. Some of those we help become spiritual parents will have a similar background to Timothy. We want to help them learn to recognize how their background uniquely equips them to minister to others.

As you help spiritual parents develop their ministry to spiritual children, remember that they may have the potential for a wider ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help them develop that wider ministry possibly even to other cultures, religions, ethnic groups, and even other language groups.

11. Objectives for Spiritual Growth for New Christians

In Exodus 18:20, we have a very profound statement about how to help others experience healthy spiritual growth. Jethro told Moses, “And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do.” In this verse, we see that Moses was to help the people grow spiritually in three ways:

1. He was to teach the people ordinances and laws - growth in the Word of God
2. He was to show the people the way to walk - growth in character and attitude
3. He was to show the people the work to do - growth in ministry

We are to help people grow in these same three ways if we want to see them become healthy reproducing Christians. One of the things we notice is that two of the three areas of growth mentioned here are taught by example rather than word. To help others begin their spiritual growth, we also want them to grow in:

- ♦ Godly character and attitude - they will learn how to grow from our example
- ♦ Knowledge of the Word of God - they will learn the Word as we teach them the Word, teach them how to feed themselves and show them how to obey what they learn
- ♦ Growth in ministry - they will learn to serve from our example

First, we see that we want to show people how to grow in godly character and attitude. In order for this to happen our first goal is to see them transformed in their spirit. At the moment a person places his or her trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit comes into the human spirit. This does not automatically transform their spirit because it is very easy to grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30-32) and quench the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Instead, new Christians need to be shown how to become strong in spirit.

1. Our spirit is being transformed as we learn to submit to the righteousness of God. Romans 6 tells us the following things about how we submit to the righteousness of God:
 - We know that our old man is crucified with Christ - Romans 6:6
 - We reckon (act) on the fact that we are now dead to sin - Romans 6:11
 - We yield ourselves to the righteousness of God - Romans 6:13, 16

The new Christian needs a mature Christian to walk beside him and show him what it means to yield the human spirit to the Holy Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis. As we spend time with the new Christian, we are showing him by our example what it means to yield to the Holy Spirit (This assumes that we are making it a habit to yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit as we deal with the different situations that we face in our life).

2. Our spirit is being transformed as we move from fear to love. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” As we mentioned in earlier topics, the non-Christian is motivated by separation from God, fear, guilt and shame within and blame in his relationship with others. As a Christian begins to take root in the love of Christ (Ephesians 4:17-19), his human spirit is becoming more and more controlled by the love of Christ instead of fear. As 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 tell us, it is this love that begins to become the motivating force in his or her life. This growth in godly character and attitude affects that person. It also affects those around him because others are seeing a more loving attitude develop in the life of that person.

3. Our spirit is being transformed as we learn to live by faith. 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.” Spiritual growth causes a Christian to learn to depend on Christ more and more, because he is learning to have faith in Christ instead of faith in himself.

Learning to live by faith is shown by a maturity of prayer life that includes both more prayer and also a change in the types of things about which the person prays. A spiritual toddler tends to focus his prayer on “My needs and my problems.” A person who is learning to live by faith will begin to pray more for others. In addition, the prayer life will become more focused on spiritual needs and not just physical needs.

4. Our spirit is being transformed as we learn to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:13-16 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. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, *even* in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another! I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” In these verses, we see that at least three things happen as we learn to walk in the Spirit. We:

- Understand that we have been set free
- Realize that we are not to use our freedom to sin
- Realize that we have been given power to walk in the Spirit

New Christians, and spiritual toddlers, are beginning to change from the inside out as they learn to yield their spirit to the Holy Spirit. These changes produce some dramatic differences in character and attitude as this transforms the fear, guilt, and shame that has controlled them since birth. In addition to growing strong in spirit, we also want to help new Christians grow in their knowledge of the Word of God. This will result in a transformed soul (mind, emotions and will).

The mind of a new Christian is being transformed as he or she learns the Word of 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.” We renew our mind as we grow in our knowledge of the Word of God. We want to show new Christians each of the five ways we grow in our knowledge of the Word of God so they can grow in the same five ways. That means that we spend time talking with the new Christian and discussing how we are continuing to learn the Word of God. We want to help them see that we are continuing to grow in our knowledge of the Word of God because we focus on:

- * Hearing the Word of God - Romans 10:17
- * Reading the Word of God - Revelation 1:3
- * Studying the Word of God - 2 Timothy 2:15
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- * Meditating on the Word of God - Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3

The emotions of a new Christian are being transformed as he learns to take root in the love of God. Paul gives us a model of how to pray for the new Christian in Ephesians 3:16-19 when he prayed, “that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” In these verses, we see that Paul gives us an example of praying for five spiritual needs of a new Christian:

- ♦ That they would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man
- ♦ That Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith
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As we pray these things for the new Christian, 1 John 4:10-11 tells us two things that will happen in the life of a growing Christian, “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.” The growing Christian will:

- Take root in the love of God
- Grow in experiencing the love of God

The will of the new Christian is being transformed as he learns to submit his will to the will of God. Christ is our perfect example of submitting our will to the will of God. In Matthew 26:39 Christ prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.” As we see the example of Christ, we see that He chose to do the will of the Father. We want to help the new Christian learn that he is now free to choose the will of the Father which will have eternal benefits rather than choosing his own will which will only have temporary results. The Christian who is growing strong in spirit, transforming his mind through the Word of God, and transforming his emotions as he takes root in the love of Christ will have a greater and greater desire to do the will of God because his focus is changing from immediate pleasure to eternal rewards (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The Lord wants to use you to help new Christians grow and mature by helping them grow in character and attitude as well as grow in knowledge. In our next topic, we will focus on helping them grow in ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians grow strong in spirit and then be transformed in their souls (mind, emotions and will).

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The will of the new Christian is being transformed as he learns to submit his will to the will of God. Christ is our perfect example of submitting our will to the will of God. In Matthew 26:39 Christ prayed, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*.” As we see the example of Christ, we see that He chose to do the will of the Father. We want to help the new Christian learn that he is now free to choose the will of the Father which will have eternal benefits rather than choosing his own will which will only have temporary results. The Christian who is growing strong in spirit, transforming his mind through the Word of God, and transforming his emotions as he takes root in the love of Christ will have a greater and greater desire to do the will of God because his focus is changing from immediate pleasure to eternal rewards (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The Lord wants to use you to help new Christians grow and mature by helping them grow in character and attitude as well as grow in knowledge. In our next topic, we will focus on helping them grow in ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians grow strong in spirit and then be transformed in their souls (mind, emotions and will).

13. Helping Spiritual Newborns Build Their Relationship with God

In order to help new Christians build their relationship with God, there are at least five areas where we want to help them:

- Learn about God (Bible study)
- Learn to talk to God (prayer)
- Learn to know God (fellowship)
- Learn to serve God (obedience)
- Learn to yield to the Holy Spirit (power for change)

First, we want to help new Christians and toddlers learn to build their relationship with God. The key to helping spiritual newborns learn how to build their relationship with God is not to tell them to study their Bible. Instead, the key is to have Bible study with them so that they get their questions answered. Christ took the disciples with Him so that He could answer the questions that were in their minds. Before people become Christians, they lack spiritual understanding - 1 Corinthians 2:14. (Many people also lack reading comprehension.) For this reason, a new Christian will have many of the same questions, whether he has never been to school or has multiple doctoral degrees from the best universities in the world.

As we are studying the Bible with the new Christian, we want to help him learn to know God from the Word of God. In the process of studying with him, we want to help him learn about God from the Bible in five ways:

- ⇒ By hearing the Word of God - Romans 10:17
- ⇒ By reading the Word of God - Revelation 1:3
- ⇒ By studying the Word of God - 2 Timothy 2:15
- ⇒ By memorizing the Word of God - Psalm 119:11
- ⇒ By meditating on the Word of God - Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3

Most people first get involved in learning about God by hearing someone else read the Bible. Those who become Christians, and begin to grow, usually start to read, some start to study and some begin to memorize. However, all four of these ways of learning about God through the Bible have one common problem. People learn to know about God, but they do not really get to know God. We want to spend time with them so they can see how we are getting to know God. In addition, they will usually only start to get to really know God as they learn to meditate on the Word of God, along with learning to experience the following responses to their meditation:

- * Learning to practice daily cleansing from sin - John 13:9-10
- * Learning to obey the commands of Christ - John 13:12-17
- * Learning to love one another - John 13:34-35
- * Learning to yield to the Holy Spirit - John 14:13-27
- * Learning to abide in Christ - John 15:1-8
- * Learning to take root in the love of Christ - John 15:9-17

Second, we want to help new Christians learn to talk to God through prayer. The key to helping spiritual newborns learn how to pray is not to teach a class on prayer. Instead, the key is to pray for them and with them. Many people have learned how to say prayers, but they haven't the slightest idea what it actually means to pray. (I often ask Christians what they feel like when they are praying. Do they feel like they are talking on a phone with a million mile line and a bad connection or do they feel like they are talking face to face with God. Even many who have been Christians for a long time feel like they have a bad connection.) Paul told people what he prayed for them many times. One of the great examples of Paul's prayer for Christians is given in Ephesians 3:14-21. "For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory,

to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height -- to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

Paul included the following things in his prayer for the Ephesians:

- That they would be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man
- That Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith
- That they would become rooted and grounded in love
- That they would know the love of Christ which passes knowledge
- That they would be filled with all the fullness of God

We need to help new Christians learn to pray that the Holy Spirit would give strength to their human spirit (this happens as they learn to yield to God instead of depending on their own strength). We need to help them learn to share their lives with Christ by praying in faith. We need to help them understand how to begin to take root in the love of Christ (this happens as they ask Christ to give them His love for others). We need to help them begin to know the love of Christ which is greater than any human love (this happens as they pray for spiritual understanding of the love of Christ rather than human understanding). Then, they need to pray that God will help them to understand how He fills their lives as they yield to Him (this happens as they learn to pray at any time about anything so that they have Christ’s power flowing through them).

Third, we want the new Christian to learn to know God through fellowship. The key to helping new Christians learn to experience fellowship with God is not to teach a class on fellowship. Instead, the key is to invite them to share fellowship with you so that they will be able to observe your fellowship with God. As you spend time together and share how you are applying Biblical principles to your daily life, they will begin to learn those principles and how to apply them to their daily lives. John shared some key principles for fellowship in 1 John 1:3-7.

“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. 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.”

In these verses, John shared the fact that we can only share what we have experienced ourselves. In addition, he shared the following principles about fellowship:

- ♦ True fellowship is with both the Father and the Son
- ♦ True fellowship will produce joy rather than happiness (happiness is based on what is happening around us, joy is based on what is happening within us)
- ♦ True fellowship is based on the fact that God is light
- ♦ True fellowship will not happen if we are walking in darkness
- ♦ True fellowship will happen as we learn to walk in the light
- ♦ True fellowship happens both with God and with other Christians
- ♦ True fellowship requires daily cleansing from our sins

As we can see, fellowship is a life shared not a topic taught!

Fourth, we want the new Christian to learn to serve God through obedience. New Christians do not have a history of obedience to God. The new Christian did not even know God to obey Him. The

spiritual toddler has not had a history of obedience, and that is why he has remained a spiritual toddler. Obedience is primarily caught rather than taught. Christians learn to obey and serve God as they have the opportunity to see by personal observation of other Christians how to obey and serve God. Paul made this very clear by the principles he shared in 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

“You *are* witnesses, and God *also*, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father *does* his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.”

In these verses, we see the following principles for learning to obey and serve God:

- New Christians learn to obey by the example of other Christians
- New Christians need examples that are devout, just and blameless
- New Christians need examples that spend time with them
- New Christians need examples that will encourage them
- New Christians need examples that will comfort them
- New Christians need examples that will urge them to do right
- New Christians need a caring spiritual father and mother
- New Christians need to be shown a worthy walk to follow

From these principles, we see that new Christians learn how to serve God and be obedient to His commandments as they see spiritual parents giving them an example to follow. The only way they can have an example to follow is if Christians will become spiritual parents who spend time with them. As new Christians spend time with you, they will become what you are whether that is good or bad. Obedience and service are caught not taught!

Fifth, we want the new Christian to learn to yield to the Holy Spirit so that he or she has the power to change. Most new Christians and spiritual toddlers have a great desire to change, but they have no idea how to change. They have tried to change at different times and have always failed. What they are experiencing is described perfectly in Romans 7:18-20.

“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. 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 lives, we see that one of three things is true about our life at any time. There are great differences between non-Christians, Christians who depend on self, and Christians who yield to God. These differences are:

Non - Christians

Have no desire to change Have no power to change

Christians who depend on self

Have a desire to change Have no power to change

Christians who yield to God

Have a desire to change Have the power to change

The sin that dwells in us is the sin of depending on self (acting independent of God) instead of yielding to God and asking Him to give us His strength to change. Christ told the disciples in John 15:5 that they could do nothing without Him. He told them, in Luke 24:49, to wait in Jerusalem until they were clothed with power from on high. Then, He promised them, in Acts 1:8, that they would have power to be witnesses for Him as they yielded to the Holy Spirit. We are also given the following promises in 2 Timothy 1:7, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” We want to help new Christians learn from our example, and from

the Word, that:

- ◆ They have been given the spirit of power
- ◆ They have been given the spirit of love
- ◆ They have been given the spirit of a sound mind (self-control)

We want to help them understand that if they depend on self, they will:

- Only have human will power
- Act out of fear
- Act out of guilt and shame

We want to help them understand that when they yield their spirit to the Holy Spirit, they will:

- Have the power of the Holy Spirit
- Act out of love
- Act out of self-discipline

One of the most exciting things after seeing a person become a Christian is seeing them build their relationship with God. May the Lord richly bless you as you show new Christians how to build their relationship with God.

14. Helping Spiritual Newborns Build Their Relationship with a Spiritual Parent

In our last topic, we talked about helping new Christians build their relationship with God. Today, we will be talking about helping new Christians build their relationship with a spiritual parent. Paul talked about the tremendous need for spiritual parents in 1 Corinthians 4:14-17.

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

In these verses, we see that:

- * Paul became a spiritual parent to the Corinthians
- * Paul said they had many instructors who wanted to drive them with severe discipline
- * Paul said they had few spiritual fathers who loved them
- * Paul said they had few spiritual fathers who provided an example to imitate
- * Paul said that Timothy was an example of a beloved and faithful spiritual son
- * Paul said that Timothy would remind them of his actions

In order to experience balanced spiritual growth, every new Christian needs spiritual parents. For those who grow up in godly Christian homes, the physical parents often become the spiritual parents. However, for those who do not grow up in godly Christian homes or who become Christians as adults, they need mature Christians who will become spiritual parents to them.

First, in order to be a spiritual parent who is able to help new Christians grow, we need to build a relationship of trust and love with the new Christian. Relationships between parents and young children are developed by what the parents say and do. The same is true for building relationships between spiritual parents and new Christians. 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 gives the characteristics of a spiritual parent who is working to develop trust.

“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.”

In these verses, we see the following characteristics of a spiritual parent who wants to develop trust:

- ♦ An attitude of gentleness
- ♦ The tender love of a nursing mother
- ♦ A strong desire to show that love
- ♦ A sharing of their life with the spiritual newborn
- ♦ Treating the spiritual newborn as worthy of love
- ♦ A willingness to sacrifice for the spiritual new born
- ♦ A willingness to be available and serve

Trust is something that a potential spiritual parent either chooses to develop or fails to develop by the choices that potential spiritual parent makes. Those who are new Christians do not even know what they need in order to develop effectively in their spiritual lives. As a result, they do not even know that they need someone who will show tender love and care to them. That is why it is the responsibility of spiritually mature Christians to become spiritual parents and help new Christians in their growth and spiritual development.

Second, in order to be a spiritual parent who is able to help new Christians grow, we need to provide an example or model for the new Christian to follow. Most of what new Christians will learn, during this period of their spiritual development, will be learned from what they see, instead of what they are taught. That is why they need spiritual parents who can provide them with an example to follow. If the examples they follow are controlled by inner fear, guilt, and shame, they will become Christians who are controlled by external rules rather than becoming Christians who are taking root in the love of Christ. That is why Paul said, in 1 Corinthians 4:14-17:

“I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn *you*. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.”

In these verses, we see that new Christians and spiritual toddlers:

- Do not need additional shame
- Do need warnings from spiritual parents
- Do need those who commit to be spiritual parents
- Do need examples that they can imitate
- Do need reminders of the way we walk

Paul also told Timothy the areas of our example as spiritual parents which will have the greatest impact on others in their spiritual development. This instruction was given in 1 Timothy 4:12, where we read: “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” In these verses, we see that:

- ◆ We are to be an example by the way we speak
- ◆ We are to be an example by the way we act
- ◆ We are to be an example in our love
- ◆ We are to be an example in our spirit
- ◆ We are to be an example in our faith
- ◆ We are to be an example in our purity

Third, in order to be a spiritual parent who is able to help new Christians grow, there are five other things that we need to do to help new Christians develop in their spiritual lives. Jethro first emphasized these five things to Moses in Exodus 18:19-21.

“Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.”

In these verses, we see five things that we are to do as a spiritual parent to help new Christians mature in their spiritual lives:

- We are to pray for those we are parenting
- We are to teach them the Word of God
- We are to show them the way to walk
- We are to show them the work to do
- We are to share the work

In helping new Christians grow, one of the key things is to begin to give them opportunities to

share in the work of the Lord as soon as possible. One way we do this is by taking them with us when we go to share the Gospel with their relatives, their friends, their co-workers, and their neighbors. We also begin to take them with us in any other situation where they can learn by observing - visiting in the hospital, visiting the sick, comforting the grieving, etc.

Jethro also recognized that the maximum number of people most people could help to develop is about ten at a time (many may be only able to help one or two at a time depending on their own level of spiritual development). Some can only exercise direct leadership, while others can lead other leaders (indirect leadership). As a result, Jethro suggested to Moses that he appoint:

- Leaders of tens
- Leaders of fifties (work with five leaders of groups of ten)
- Leaders of hundreds (work with ten leaders of groups of ten)
- Leaders of thousands (work with ten leaders who work with ten leaders of groups of ten)

New Christians are not yet ready to become leaders of tens, because they do not yet have the spiritual maturity to lead others. However, you can begin to think from the first day a person becomes a Christian, “What do I need to do to help this person grow to a point of spiritual maturity where he will be able to lead ten other Christians?” With our physical children, we need to begin thinking from the day each child is born, “What do I need to do to help this infant become a mature adult who is able to raise his or her own family?” In the same way, we need to begin to think that way from the day we lead a person to Christ. When we do this, we will focus on bringing each person to maturity rather than just helping them with their problems. We either develop a plan of action for our ministry or we spend all of our time reacting to problems and never bring anyone to spiritual maturity. What is your plan of action to help new Christians grow and mature?

It is exciting to see new Christians grow and mature. It becomes even more exciting when we see them start to become reproductive Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you reach people for Christ and then help them become reproductive Christians.

We will be obedient Christians as we follow a Biblical process of Making Disciples

Four Calls and A Commission

“Come and See”

John 1:39-46, Matthew 9:9-10, Mark 1:30-33

Reach

Evangelize

You do
I serve you as a bondservant
Mark 10:44

I do (I lead by love)
You observe
John 2:1-12

**As you are going,
Make Disciples
Matthew 28:19-20
Send**

Extend

**“Come and Grow”
Mark 1:16-20
Teach**

Edify

**The Process of
Making Disciples**

You do
I serve you in love
Mark 10:43

I do (I minister in love)
You participate
Mark 1:35-39

**Expand the
Leadership**

Equip

**“Come and Shepherd”
John 21:15-17
Mobilize**

**“Come and Serve”
Mark 3:13-15
Train**

You do
I observe and encourage
Matt. 10:1-42, Mark 6:30-31

**World Model (Greek Model) - Develop by Telling
Biblical Model (Hebrew Model) - Develop by Showing**

Four Calls and A Commission (page 1 of 1) - Updated: July 2023

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