

### 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.