

## 11. Helping Spiritual Parents Develop an Effective Ministry

In our last few topics, we have been talking about spiritual young men and women. Today, we will begin to look at what the Bible teaches about spiritual parents. Just as a physical parent enjoys learning how to become a more effective parent, a spiritual parent has an even greater desire to learn how to become an effective spiritual parent. In the previous topics, we have discussed how growing Christians build their relationships with Christ, with their family, with a spiritual family, and with an extended spiritual family.

Today, we want to discuss how to become effective spiritual parents who are able to show others how to experience healthy growth and development in their spiritual lives. The Bible gives us some excellent examples of people who became spiritual parents to help others in their spiritual growth. Paul, Silas, and Timothy provide some of the best examples of spiritual parents other than Christ.

Two key passages which talk about the spiritual parenting ministry of these men are 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 and 1 Corinthians 4:15-17. In 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12, we see how Paul, Silas, and Timothy helped the Christians in the city of Thessalonica grow. In verses 7 through 9, we see that they provided the tender care of a nursing mother. In these verses, we see that they:

- Cherished these new Christians like a nursing mother cares for her own children
- Had a great longing for the development of these new Christians
- Shared their own lives with these new Christians
- Were available to help these new Christians night and day
- Made sure that they were not a burden to these new Christians

In 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, we see that these three men provided the godly example of a godly father. In these verses, we see that they:

- \* Provided an example of a holy life
- \* Provided an example of a just and righteous life
- \* Provided an example of a blameless life
- \* Provided encouragement and comfort
- \* Provided encouragement to live a godly life
- \* Provided encouragement to a worthy walk

In 1 Corinthians 4:15-17, Paul encouraged the Christians because he:

- Had begotten them through the Gospel
- Give them an example to imitate
- Sent Timothy to encourage them
- Said Timothy would remind them of Paul's conduct in Christ
- Said Timothy would remind them of Paul's teachings

Just like the other levels of spiritual maturity, Scripture gives us a profile of a spiritual parent. By the very definition of the word “parent”, there must be one or more spiritual children. A spiritual parent is one who has taken the personal responsibility to help one or more spiritual children in

their total spiritual development, not just in their growth in knowledge. The following characteristics will be seen in a spiritual parent:

- \* a spiritual parent is advanced in his knowledge of God - 1 John 2:13-14
- \* a spiritual parent demonstrates true care for spiritual children - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12
- \* a spiritual parent has one or a few Timothys that he is bringing to spiritual maturity - 2 Timothy 2:1-2
- \* a spiritual parent has become a mature disciple - Matthew 13:52

Since the word “disciple” is used by many people who have little or no understanding of what the word really means, we will look for a moment at the characteristics of a Christian parent which are defined for us in Matthew 13:52, “Then He said to them, Therefore every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old.” From this verse, we see that a mature disciple has the following characteristics:

- ◆ He is instructed concerning the kingdom of God
- ◆ He is the head of a spiritual household - one or more spiritual children
- ◆ He has a treasure (the Word of God)
- ◆ He shares from his treasure things that are new (he is continuing to study the Word and grow)
- ◆ He shares from his treasure things that are old ( he is able to share basic teachings from the Word of God)

As a Christian grows and matures, he begins to develop priorities for his own personal growth and development. The priorities of a mature spiritual parent will be:

- To know Christ - Philippians 3:10
- To be motivated by the love of Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:14
- To serve Christ as a bondservant - 2 Timothy 2:24-25
- To finish the race well by keeping the faith - 2 Timothy 4:7-8

If we are helping others become spiritual parents, there are certain things we want to do to help them to grow in character and attitude. Of course, these things must be a part of our own lives, because we can only lead others as far as we have gone ourselves. A spiritual parent wants to:

- ⇒ be an example to follow - 1 Corinthians 4:14-17, 11:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:6
- ⇒ provide love - 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9
- ⇒ provide encouragement - 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12
- ⇒ provide instruction from the Word of God - Acts 20:20

There are also certain areas of knowledge that are important for us to share with those who are becoming spiritual parents. Spiritual parents need to:

- learn what to teach those who are younger - Titus 2:4-8
- learn when to teach those who are younger - 1 Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 19:9
- learn how to teach those who are younger - Acts 20:27

Most teaching, by physical parents, is not done in a classroom. The same should be true for spiritual parents. Most teaching happens because the spiritual parent and spiritual child are spending time together. As a result, the model for teaching spiritual children is the same as the

model for teaching physical children. That model is given for us in Deuteronomy 6:6-9, where we read: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” In these verses, we see that both physical parents and spiritual parents:

- ◆ must have the Word of God in their hearts
- ◆ need to help people become sharp in the Word
- ◆ need to share the Word in informal situations
- ◆ need to model the Word by their actions
- ◆ need to have the Word of God in their thoughts
- ◆ need to share the Word of God in their homes

Those who are becoming spiritual parents also need continued encouragement in their growth in ministry. They are now taking the responsibility to help other Christians grow. They will only help others grow as they continue to grow themselves. We need to help Christians that are becoming spiritual parents realize that:

- ministry grows as we spend time with spiritual children - John 1:39; Mark 1:16-20
- ministry grows as we help spiritual children develop priorities - Mark 1:38-39
- ministry grows as we show spiritual children how to minister - Mark 3:13-15
- ministry grows as we help spiritual children learn to minister - Mark 6:7, 30-31

Christ wants each of us to learn to multiply our ministry. We multiply our ministry as we help others come to Christ, grow and become spiritually mature, and then become spiritual parents to others. Each spiritual parent the Lord enables us to develop results in a multiplication of our own ministry. May the Lord richly bless you as you help Christians mature and become reproductive spiritual parents.