

## 2. Developing Spiritual Children into Spiritual Young Men

As we think about how we help spiritual children grow and become spiritual young men, we want them to continue to grow in the same ways that they grew to become a spiritual child. We saw in the previous topics that Jethro taught Moses, in Exodus 18:20, to help people grow in three ways:

- Growth in character and attitude
- Growth in knowledge
- Growth in ministry

First, as we think about growth in character and attitude, our goal is to help each Christian continue to grow in the development of godly character and attitude. In order for this to happen, we need to know what will help them continue to develop and we need to show them how these things develop in their lives. This means that spending time with a spiritual parent is equally as important, or even more important, at this stage of development so that growing Christians can be shown how to grow in godly character and attitude. To become strong in spirit, a growing Christian needs to be shown how to:

- Live in the Spirit - Galatians 5:25
- Walk in the Spirit - Galatians 5:16-18
- Be led by the Spirit - Romans 8:12-14
- Be filled with the Spirit - Ephesians 5:18

In addition to becoming strong in spirit, by learning to submit to the Holy Spirit, there are some other key areas where we want to help a spiritual child grow in his development so that he will develop and become a spiritual young man. Again, the growing Christian needs to be taught these things by example as he observes the life of one or more spiritual parents. A spiritual child that is growing:

- Is developing a good reputation - Acts 16:1-2
- Is becoming an example to others - 1 Timothy 4:12
- Is becoming a person of godly wisdom - James 1:5, 3:13-18
- Is developing the attitude of a servant - Mark 10:42-45

I am sure that all of us would agree that we want to see these things happen in the lives of growing Christians. However, knowing these things does not mean that they automatically happen. In fact, many of these things are not true of people who have been Christians for many years. These things did not happen automatically with the disciples of Christ either. Christ had a plan of action to help the disciples in their development. Christ gave an open invitation to all to get to know Him and follow Him. Some responded (John 1:35-46), and some did not (Luke 9:56-62; Mark 10:17-22).

About a year after that first invitation, in John 1:35-46, we see that Christ gives some of those same men a second invitation. In Mark 1:16-20, Christ said to those same men, “‘Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also *were* in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”

In these verses, we see that in addition to inviting the disciples to follow Him, Christ also told the disciples what He was going to help them become. There are certain characteristics that we find in the disciples Christ invited to follow Him in the book of Mark:

- ◆ They were responders
- ◆ They were all called while working
- ◆ They were willing to commit themselves to spending more time with Christ

In these verses, we also see certain things that Christ did:

- He went to them where they worked
- He gave them a personal invitation to spend more time with Him
- He committed Himself to spend more time with them
- He promised to help them become fishers of men

The disciples did not know it, but as they committed themselves to spend more time with Christ, some radical changes were going to happen in their lives. Similar radical changes will happen in the lives of those who begin to spend more time with us. The disciples:

- \* Saw Christ teach - Mark 1:21
- \* Heard Christ teach with authority - Mark 1:22
- \* Saw the power of Christ over demons - Mark 1:23-26
- \* Began to discuss this power and authority among themselves - Mark 1:27-28
- \* Saw Christ minister to their family - Mark 1:29-31
- \* Saw Christ minister to the entire town - Mark 1:32-34
- \* Saw Christ's passion for fellowship with the Father - Mark 1:35
- \* Saw Christ's concern for the next towns - Mark 1:36-38
- \* Saw Christ's concern for the entire region - Mark 1:39
- \* Saw Christ touch the untouchable leper - Mark 1:40-42
- \* Saw Christ's concern for a testimony to the priests - Mark 1:43-44
- \* Saw Christ minister to the multitudes - Mark 1:45

While the disciples watched these things happen, certain things were happening in their lives. They were:

- ⇒ Learning what to teach
- ⇒ Learning how to teach
- ⇒ Learning how to minister to others (family, neighbors)
- ⇒ Learning the importance of fellowship with the Father
- ⇒ Learning to develop a larger vision for an entire region
- ⇒ Learning to be concerned for all segments of society (the untouchables to the priests)
- ⇒ Learning to serve the multitudes and not just themselves

As you will notice, most of these things can only be learned by example and cannot be taught in a classroom or from a sermon. However, something even greater was happening. The disciples were being exposed to Christ as they traveled with Him to the various towns of Galilee. They were seeing the character of Christ which gave them a model for their own lives. They saw the

attitudes and the concerns of Christ as they went with Him. These are things that will never be learned in a classroom or from sermons. The same thing is true for people today. People will not learn how to develop godly character from books or lectures. These things are only learned from example. That is why we will be most effective if we spend time with people and have them with us in a wide variety of situations. Character and attitude are learned from example. They are primarily caught not taught.

Second, as we think about growth in knowledge, our goal is to help each Christian continue to grow both in his or her knowledge of the Word of God and also the application of that Word to their daily living. Many Christians grow in knowledge, but they do not know how to put into practice what they are learning. That is why we also want to help Christians learn to put into practice what they are learning. During this period of development, in the life of the growing Christian, we want to help them focus on at least three things. A spiritual child that is growing:

- Is becoming familiar with the entire Word of God - 2 Timothy 3:14-17
- Is having effective meditation become a basic part of life - Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-3
- Is developing a clear commitment to the doctrines of the Word of God - 1 Timothy 4:16

Third, as we think about growth in ministry, our goal is to help each Christian grow and develop an effective and balanced ministry. Effective ministry is based on healthy relationships with others. A spiritual child that is growing:

- Is developing an effective ministry of submission to spiritual leaders - Titus 2:4-8; 1 Peter 5:5-6
- Is developing an effective ministry in the home - Colossians 3:17-21
- Is developing an effective ministry of service to the body - Acts 16:1-2
- Is developing an effective ministry of evangelism to the lost - Acts 8:4, 11:19-21

We will look at the topic of growth in ministry in more detail in our next two topics as we see how spiritual growth should affect our relationships both in our physical family as well as in our spiritual family. As you help growing Christians develop their ministry, the physical and spiritual families become key areas for growth and development during this period of spiritual life. May the Lord richly bless you as you help growing Christians continue to grow in godly character and attitude, Biblical knowledge and ministry.