

3. Learning to Walk in the Light and Love

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

In 1 John 2:3-6, we read, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” We see that these verses give four principles to help our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the light, and then help others learn to walk in the light.

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

- knowing the power of His resurrection
- knowing the fellowship of His sufferings
- becoming conformable to His death

We begin to understand the power of His resurrection as we learn to yield our lives to Him so that He can work through our lives. This results in us learning to walk in the Spirit. Galatians 5:16 says, “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.” We begin to understand the fellowship of His sufferings as we learn to live godly lives. 2 Timothy 3:12 says, “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” We are becoming conformed to His death as our purpose in life is to live for Christ. Philippians 1:21 says, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” As we are learning to live for Christ, we are learning to die to self.

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

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

Third, obedience develops our love to maturity. We saw above, in Galatians 5:16, that we are encouraged to walk in the Spirit. Then, Galatians 5:18 says, “But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” Ephesians 5:18 says, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” As we walk in the Spirit, are led by the Spirit, and are filled with the Spirit, Galatians 5:22-23 says that our lives will bear the fruit of the Spirit. Those verses say, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” That is why 1 John 2:5 tells us, “But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.” Christ perfects His love in our lives and brings that love to maturity as we walk in the light.

Fourth, obedience will cause us to follow the example of Christ. 1 John 2:6 tells us, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.” The night before His crucifixion, Christ washed the feet of the disciples. When He had finished, He said, in John 13:15-17, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.” As our love matures, we want to walk in the same way that Christ walked.

In addition to helping our physical and spiritual children learn to walk in the light by being obedient, we also want to help them learn to walk in love toward others. 1 John 2:7-11 says, “Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.” Christ said that we learn to walk in love as we practice obedience in our lives.

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

love ourselves.

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

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

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

Second, we are warned not to quench the Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22, we read, “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.” The word “quench” is used when we put out a fire. We quench the fire of the Holy Spirit when we are disobedient Christians. Happiness depends on what is going on around us. Joy depends on what is happening within us. Here, we see that as we are walking in the light of Christ, we will be enjoying fellowship with Christ. This fellowship will fill us with joy, regardless of what is going on around us. We will be talking with the Lord about various things throughout the day. We will have a thankful attitude. We will test all things and hold to the things that are good and avoid the things that are evil. As we do these things, the light of Christ, and the love of Christ, will be seen in our lives. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to walk in the light so that their lives demonstrate the love of Christ.