

18. Learning to Build Up Weak Christians

In our last several topics, we have seen how to help our children learn to develop a ministry that will help both those who are married and those who choose to remain single. After Paul finished answering the questions about marriage, he turned to a completely different topic. Many of the people in Corinth had worshiped idols before they became followers of Christ. This often involved offering food sacrifices to those idols. The priests of the idol temples would then sell the food to pay the expenses of the temple. As a result, this caused the Christians in Corinth to have questions about eating food that had been offered to idols. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In I Corinthians 8:1-3, we read, “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.” Since the people had bought food for many years that had been offered to idols, some of them now had questions about whether it was right to buy such food since they had become Christians. Other Christians were more mature and knew that idols and demons had no power over the people who ate food that had been offered to idols. As a result, this was causing conflict in the church at Corinth. As a result, Paul began by first speaking to the Christians that were more mature.

Paul reminded the more mature Christians that they had knowledge and knew that idols and demons have no power over people who ate food that had been offered to idols. However, Paul warned them that knowledge without love can be very destructive. Knowledge will cause a person to become proud. Romans 14:1-3 says, “Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.” Paul knew that a proud Christian would despise those Christians who were weaker. As a result, Paul wanted the stronger Christians to show their love instead of their knowledge. Paul knew that love and understanding shown to the weaker Christians would help to build them up in their spiritual growth while pride would hinder their spiritual growth. That same thing is true today.

Paul reminded the more mature Christians that they do not yet know all things. In fact, any Christian that thinks he has superior knowledge should understand that he does not yet have full knowledge of anything. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘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.’” The thoughts and ways of the Lord are so much higher than our thoughts and ways that none of us has any room for pride. We do not yet understand anything fully. As a result, we see that we should be known for our love for God instead of our human knowledge. When we love God, we can know that we are known by Him.

After warning the more mature Christians about the dangers of pride, Paul goes on to answer the

questions of those who did not want to eat food that had been offered to idols. In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6, it says, “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there is* no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.” Paul said that their question about eating things offered to idols was an important question.

Then, Paul said that an idol is nothing in the world. Here, we see that an idol has no power because an idol is nothing and has no life. Psalm 135:15-18 says, “The idols of the nations *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands. They have mouths, but they do not speak; eyes they have, but they do not see; they have ears, but they do not hear; nor is there *any* breath in their mouths. Those who make them are like them; *so is* everyone who trusts in them.” Idols were often made to look like people. Their faces had eyes and mouths. However, they had no life in them. Since idols lack life, they had no power to do anything.

People made many idols that were called gods by the people who made them. As a result, there are many idols that are called gods. Some of these so-called gods are in the heavens because people worship the sun, moon or stars. Other so-called gods are on earth because people made them from metal, wood or stones. However, none of these gods have any life in them. As a result, the people who had formerly followed these idols did not have to be afraid of them.

Instead, these weak Christians needed to understand that there is only one true and living God, the Father who willed the creation of all things. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” In fact, the very fact that we are here on this earth is the result of the will of the Father. In addition, there is only one Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the One through whom the Father created all things. John 1:1-3 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” Here, we see that Christ was the One who carried out the will of the Father by creating the heavens and the earth.

In addition, we also see that it is through Christ that we receive spiritual life. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It is also important to help our children learn to explain to others that Christ is our source of life. Before we placed our trust in Christ, we were spiritually dead because we were separated from God. At the moment that we placed our trust in Christ, He placed the Holy Spirit in our human spirit and we immediately received spiritual life. This is one of the things that we want to help our children to fully understand so that they can explain what has happened in their lives to every new Christian. Before any person places their faith in Christ they are spiritually dead because their trespasses and sins separate them from God. At the moment of salvation, that death is changed to life because their sins are forgiven and they receive spiritual life and become the children of God.

Many new Christians, as well as some who have been Christians for many years, do not understand the changes that happened in their lives at the moment of salvation. That is why

1 Corinthians 8:7-8 says, “However, *there is* not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat *it* as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.” Here, we see that this lack of knowledge can have a very powerful effect on weak Christians, especially those who have worshiped idols before placing their faith in Christ.

One reason why many weak Christians continue to lack understanding is explained for us in 1 Corinthians 10:20. That verse says, “Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.” Many people who offer sacrifices do not just make those sacrifices to the idols. Instead, they actually make those sacrifices to demons because of their fear of evil spirits. Before coming to Christ, they used to make those sacrifices to demons because of their fear of evil spirits. Many weak Christians still have that fear of evil spirits because of things that they have seen happen in their families.

We want to help our children understand two things in order to help such individuals. First, we want them to understand the reality of demonic power. Ephesians 6:12 says, “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” Our children need to understand the reality of demons and understand that Ephesians 6:17-18 point out that our weapons in spiritual conflict are the Word of God and prayer.

Secondly, we want to help our children understand that all Christians, including new Christians, have already won the victory over all demonic power. 1 John 4:3-4 says, “And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.” Because every Christian has the Holy Spirit come into their human spirit at the moment of salvation, we already have victory over all demonic power. Because the Holy Spirit that came into our lives is God the Holy Spirit, we have God living within our lives and demons have no power against the Holy Spirit. This is an extremely important thing for weak Christians to understand.

Until new Christians come to a full understanding of the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given them victory over all demonic spirits, many of them will be weak and have their consciences defiled because of their fear of evil spirits. We want to help our children learn how to explain to new Christians the fact that the Holy Spirit has already given them victory over all evil spirits. Then, the new Christians will understand that eating various foods will not make them either better or worse. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to help weak Christians that still fear evil spirits.