

16. Helping Our Children Learn to Relate Positively to Others

In our last topic, we discussed helping our physical and spiritual children learn to comfort others, especially those who are in sorrow due to the death of a family member. Today, we want to help them learn to relate positively to one another as Christians. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 says, “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.” Today, we will focus on the topic of how to help our physical and spiritual children learn to relate to other people in ways that help to reach people for Christ and then help them grow spiritually.

This verse begins by telling us what we are not to do if we want to learn to relate in a Biblical way to others. We see that we are not to return evil for evil to anyone whether that person is a Christian or not a Christian. Christ modeled what this means in Matthew 26:49-50 where we read, “Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, ‘Greetings, Rabbi!’ and kissed Him. But Jesus said to him, ‘Friend, why have you come?’ Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and took Him.” Here, we see that Judas had just betrayed Christ with a kiss. In the moments before Christ was arrested, Christ said to Judas, “Friend, why have you come?” At the very moment that Judas was betraying Christ, Christ still treated Judas with respect and treated him as a friend. Because Christ did not sin, we know that those words were genuine and spoken in love.

However, that was not the first time that Christ had treated Judas with respect and had treated him as a friend. Early in His ministry Christ had said in John 6:70-71, “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.” Christ never told the disciples who it was that would betray Him. The disciples only found out when Judas betrayed Christ with the kiss mentioned above. Christ showed Judas the same love that He showed the other disciples throughout His ministry to the disciples.

John 12:4-6 says, “Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.” Christ knew the character of Judas. He knew that Judas was a thief. Yet Christ had given him the responsibility to carry the money box. Christ treated Judas with such great respect that He gave Judas the freedom to carry the money box and steal from it so that he would know the sinfulness of his own heart.

Perhaps the most amazing thing of all was what happened at the Last Supper. In Mark 14:18-19, we read, “Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.’ And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, ‘Is it I?’ And another said, ‘Is it I?’” Here, we see that Christ had shown just as much love to Judas as He had shown to each of the other disciples. As a result, none of the disciples suspected that Judas would be the one that would betray Christ. Instead, each one asked about himself and asked if he would do such a thing. These passages all show us that Christ had never returned evil for evil even to Judas, the one that betrayed Him. We want to help our children learn to follow the example of

Christ and help them learn to treat every person with respect and not try to return evil for evil.

Instead of returning evil for evil, we see that we want to help our children learn to pursue what is good. The word that is translated “good” in 1 Thessalonians means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. This means that things that are good are pleasing to God. In addition, they also benefit others. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Here, we see that we are to do the things that are pleasing to God to all people and especially to those who are of the household of faith. In fact, we are to look for opportunities to do good. That means that we want to help our children begin to look for opportunities to do good to both Christians and non-Christians.

In Colossians 1:10, Paul shows that we are to pray that our children will learn how to become fruitful in every good work. Colossians 1:9-12 says, “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.” In these verses, we see that we are to pray for several things for our physical and spiritual children. However, one of the things that we are to pray is that they will become fruitful in every good work.

We help our children learn to look for opportunities to do good by helping them to realize that is the purpose for which God created them. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” We want to show our children that the very purpose for which they are created in Christ was to do good works. In fact, it is the plan of God that we should help them learn to practice good works as a key part of their lives and ministry.

Ephesians 4:28-29 point out two different ways that we help our children learn to do good. Those verses say, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” In these verses, we see that we are to help our children learn to do good with their hands as they learn to help others. In addition, we are to help them learn to do good by the way that they speak to others so that they will be able to build up others by the things that they say.

In Romans 7:14-25, we see that Christians cannot do good in their own strength. Romans 7:18-19 says, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.” When we as Christians try to do good in our own strength, we will always fail. In contrast, Romans 8:37 says, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” Here, we see that the Lord can do great things through

our lives as we yield the control of our lives to the Holy Spirit. In the first seven chapters of Romans, the Holy Spirit is only mentioned once and we see in Romans 7:14-25 that we fail to do good. However, in Romans 8, the Holy Spirit is mentioned nineteen times. We see that as we yield to the Holy Spirit, He is able to do the will of God through our lives.

Yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit includes the confession of any sin that is in our lives. In 2 Timothy 2:21, we read, “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” Here, we see that we help our children learn to cleanse their lives from anything that would bring dishonor. The Lord says that those who are cleansing their lives are useful to the Master. In fact, their lives are prepared for every good work, because their lives are set apart to the Lord and they desire their lives to be holy and useful to the Lord.

Then, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” Here, we see that the Lord helps us to apply the Scriptures to our lives so that we know what the Word of God teaches, we know when we do wrong, we take steps to correct what we are doing wrong and then we are trained in righteous living. This is what produces Christians that are mature and equipped for every good work. If we are Christians that are equipped for every good work and are practicing good works, we will find that we are able to build healthy relationships with both Christians and non-Christians. This makes it possible for us to reach people and then help them grow spiritually.

The writer of Hebrews had a concern for the people to whom he was writing. We should have that same concern for our physical and spiritual children. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, “Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” God wants to make every Christian complete in every good work so that every Christian can carry out His will. As we help our children learn to carry out the will of the Lord in their relationships both with non-Christians and Christians, the Lord says the results produced through their lives will be pleasing in His sight.

As Romans 12:21 says, “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” As we help our children learn to yield to the Holy Spirit and relate positively with others, we will see the Lord work mightily through their lives because they will be using their lives to carry out good works that are pleasing to the Lord. May the Lord richly bless you as you equip your children to pursue what is good both for themselves and for all people.