

## 17. Helping Our Children Learn to Minister to the Total Person

In our last topic, we discussed helping our physical and spiritual children learn to relate positively to others in ways that help them to reach others for Christ and then build up other Christians. Today, we want to help them learn to minister to the total person. 1 Thessalonians 5:23 says, “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Today, we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to minister to the spirit as well as the soul and the body.

In the verse mentioned above, we see that Paul prayed that the whole spirit, soul and body would be preserved blameless. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to minister to the total person as they minister to others. Even most non-Christians usually know how to minister to the physical needs of others. If someone is hungry or has another physical need, even most non-Christians will share some food or what is needed to meet the physical need. As Christians we are instructed in Galatians 6:10, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Meeting physical needs is a definite part of doing good to all.

However, as Christians we are to learn to minister to more than just physical needs. We also want to help our children learn to minister to the needs of the soul. The soul includes the mind, emotions and will. As a boy, Christ demonstrated how we help our children learn to meet the mental needs of others. Luke 2:46-47 says, “Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers.” One of the things we want to help our children learn is to listen carefully and ask questions of others. A person that is a good listener and also asks good questions will cause people to think and grow in their own understanding.

We also want to show our children how to minister to the emotions of others. Romans 12:15 says, “Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.” Here, we see that Scripture helps us to understand how to minister to two different types of emotions. We want to help our children learn to rejoice with others during their times of joy. Many people have no idea how to rejoice with others. When someone shares something exciting that has happened in their lives, many people try to respond by sharing something even more exciting that happened to them. That is not what this verse means. Instead, we are to share the joy of the other person and thank the Lord with them for what the Lord is doing in their lives.

This verse also says that we want to show our children how to weep with those that weep. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” We share the comfort of the Lord by weeping with those who weep. Christ demonstrated how we are to weep with others in John 11:33-36 where we read, “Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

And He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, ‘See how He loved him!’” We want to help our children learn to share the painful emotions of others by learning to weep with them.

We help our children learn to minister to the will of others by our example as we follow the example of Christ. In Matthew 26:39, we read, “He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.’” Christ also said in John 6:38, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” As we model for our children our desire to do the will of God, by our prayers, words and actions, they will learn by example how to help others learn to do the will of the Lord.

However, the total person also includes the human spirit. Those who are not Christians can never minister to the spirit because they do not have the Holy Spirit living within their human spirit to give them the power to minister to the spirit. Our greatest ministry to our children as we help them learn to minister to the total person is to help them learn to minister to the human spirit of others. According to Hebrews 4:12, only the Scriptures can separate the soul from the spirit. Romans 1:19-32 shows us the five parts of the spirit and how mankind began to violate each part of the spirit when man chose to sin. The five parts of the spirit and how man violated each part can be seen in these verses in Romans. We see the following parts of the human spirit:

Natural light – violated by not recognizing the Godhead – Romans 1:19-20

Conscience – violated by becoming futile in their thoughts – Romans 1:21

Wisdom – violated by leaving God out of their thinking – Romans 1:22-23

Sensitivity – violated by becoming sensitive to their own sinful desires – Romans 1:24-28

Creativity – violated by finding sinful ways to satisfy sinful desires – Romans 1:29-32

Our desire is to help our physical and spiritual children learn how minister to each of these parts of the spirit in the lives of those to whom they minister. Natural light is what we can know about God from His creation. We want to help our children learn to appreciate the creation of the Lord and see His glory in it. Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” We help our children learn to see how both the heavens and the earth show the glory of God. As they learn to see the glory of God in His creation, they are being equipped to minister to others by helping others see the glory of God in His creation.

1 Timothy 4:2 says that sinful people sear their conscience. We read that people are, “Speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” When non-Christians have committed any sin enough times, they reach a point where they can commit that sin without it even bothering their conscience. At the time a person becomes a Christian, the Holy Spirit renews the conscience of the new Christian. 1 Timothy 1:5 says, “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” We want to help our children learn to show love to other by helping others realize that they can have a clear or good conscience by confessing sin as soon as they recognize that sin in their lives.

James 3 contrasts worldly wisdom with godly wisdom. James 3:14-16 describes worldly wisdom

and its results when it says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” All people without Christ depend on this worldly wisdom. In contrast, James 3:17 says, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Here, we see that godly wisdom helps us to see things from the viewpoint of the Lord and act as He acts. Psalm 111:10 tells us, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever.” Godly wisdom develops as people fear the Lord and learn to obey the commandments of the Lord.

Sensitivity is becoming sensitive to the inner spirit of others. We help our children learn to become sensitive to the inner spirit of others as we help them to become people of understanding. Proverbs 20:5 says, “Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” First, we help our children to become people of understanding by helping them learn to draw counsel from others by asking questions that will lead others to share wisdom with them. Then, we help our children learn to listen so that they can draw out the inner thoughts and feelings of others. James 1:19 says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.” As we help our children learn to really listen to others, they learn to become sensitive to the inner spirit of others. Then they can also show others how to become sensitive.

Creativity is finding ways to minister to the inner spirit of others. Daniel is a person that had great creativity. In Daniel 1:8, we see that Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself. He then suggested, in Daniel 1:11, a creative test for Melzar so that Melzar would not endanger his head with the king. (KJV) Daniel requested that Melzar give him and his three friends a ten-day test where they ate vegetables instead of the king’s food and wine. This creative test allowed God to give Daniel and his three friends great knowledge and understanding. Daniel 1:17 says, “As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Daniel continued to show this creativity throughout his life. As we help our children learn to purpose in their hearts to please the Lord in all that they do, the Lord will also give them great creativity and help them find creative ways to minister to the needs of others. Then they will also be able to show others how to develop godly creativity by their example.

The Lord is able to give our physical and spiritual children a great ministry as they learn to minister to the total person including the spirit as well as the soul and the body. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children grow as Christ grew in Luke 2:40 where we read, “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.”