

2. Helping Our Children Become Reproducing Disciples

In our last topic, we gave a summary of the process of how to help our physical and spiritual children become mature disciples. We began by looking at the Biblical definition of a disciple. We saw that to develop such disciples we follow the process given in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples. Then we saw from 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 the characteristics that must be present in our lives if we are going to give our physical and spiritual children an example to imitate. In this topic, we are going to give a summary of the process to help our children become reproducing disciples.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:5-10, we read, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit, so that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe. For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” In these verses, we are given a summary of the process for developing reproducing disciples.

In these verses, we see that God wants people to grow and become reproducing disciples. At the time Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in the city of Thessalonica, they had only been Christians for a few months. However, we see from this first chapter that their lives were being transformed and they were already beginning to have an impact throughout the entire surrounding area. It should also be our desire to see our children become reproducing Christians that begin to have an eternal impact in the lives of those to whom they minister. We will see in these verses what God wants all Christians to become.

First, we see that God wants people to make true decisions for Christ. Verse five tells us how that happens. That verse says, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.” In this verse, we see that people will make true decisions for Christ when:

1. The Word of God is proclaimed in power.
2. The Word of God is accompanied by the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
3. Those who share the Gospel have full assurance that the Holy Spirit will work in the lives of those who are hearing the Gospel.

Second, we see that God wants people to become disciples. Verse six says, “And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit.” In this verse, we see that people grow and become disciples as they:

1. Follow the example of godly leaders.
2. Follow the example of the Lord by following the Lord’s people.

3. Receive or take hold of the Word of God by learning and obeying the Word.
4. Learn to experience the joy of the Holy Spirit.

Third, we see that God wants people to learn to become examples to others. Verse seven says, “So that you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe.” Here, we see that the Christians in the city of Thessalonica were so changed and transformed that people throughout Macedonia (Northern Greece) and Achaia (Southern Greece) saw their example of the way that Christ transforms the lives of those who become obedient to Christ. In 1 Timothy 4:12, we see a list of some of the areas that we want to be examples so that others can learn from our example and become an example themselves. That verse says, “Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” In this verse, we see that we want to provide an example that will help our physical and spiritual children:

1. Learn to become examples in word.
2. Learn to become examples in conduct.
3. Learn to become examples in love.
4. Learn to become examples in spirit.
5. Learn to become examples in faith.
6. Learn to become examples in purity.

Fourth, we see that God wants people to learn to become reproducing disciples. Verse eight says, “For from you the word of the Lord has sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything.” Here, we see that the Thessalonians were sharing their faith wherever they traveled throughout both northern and southern Greece. Acts 20:20-21 tells us how we help our physical and spiritual children become reproducing Christians. Those verses say, “How I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.” In these verses, we see that we want to provide an example that will help our physical and spiritual children:

1. Become equipped to teach all that is helpful.
2. Become equipped to show others how to serve the Lord.
3. Become equipped to teach others how to serve the Lord.
4. Become equipped to do these things publicly through on-the-job training.
5. Become equipped to train others to do these things from house to house through on-the job-training.
6. Become equipped to share the Gospel with people of different cultures.
7. Become equipped to explain the meaning of repentance toward God.
8. Become equipped to explain the meaning of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fifth, we see that God wants people to make a true commitment when they repent and place their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Verses nine and ten say, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” We see that when people make a true commitment they:

1. Turn to God and come to Him through Christ.

2. Turn from idols (any, person, idea, object, etc. that is more important to them than God).
3. Begin to serve God and not just make a profession of faith.
4. Have an eager expectation of the return of Christ.

Because Paul, Silvanus and Timothy had helped the Thessalonian Christians become reproducing disciples, they were able to give a prayer of thanksgiving, a prayer of remembrance and a prayer of assurance as they prayed for these Christians. In 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4, we read, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.” We see in verse two that these men were continually thanking the Lord for what He had done in the lives of the Thessalonians that had become Christians. We see in verse four that these men knew that the Lord was transforming the Thessalonians because they had been chosen by God.

However, it is in verse three that we see the three reasons why these men could give such thanks to God. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” The three characteristics of a maturing Christian are a strong faith, a strong hope and a strong love. We see that these men could give thanks as they saw all three of these characteristics present in the lives of the Thessalonians.

First, they thanked God for their work of faith. Their faith is described in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 where we read, “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.” In this second letter, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy prayed that they would continue to work out their work of faith through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Second, they thanked God for their labor of love. 1 Thessalonians 4:9 says, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.” These men went on to pray that their love would continue to increase as they ministered to others.

Third, they thanked God for patience of hope. That patience of hope is described in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 where we read, “Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” The Thessalonians had patience as they waited for Christ to return.

It is a great joy to help our physical and spiritual children become reproducing disciples of Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to become mature, reproducing disciples of Christ.