

7. Helping Our Children Develop a True Commitment to Christ

In our last topic, we discussed helping our children learn to work with the Holy Spirit by becoming reproducing Christians. Today, we will be discussing the topic of how we help our physical and spiritual children learn to work with the Holy Spirit by helping others develop a true commitment to Christ. This means that we will help our children learn to clearly understand how to explain to others what it means to make a true commitment to Christ.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, we read, “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.” Here, we see that people throughout Macedonia and Achaia were telling Paul, Silas and Timothy about the changes that they saw in the lives of the people in Thessalonica that had become Christians.

First, we see that when people make a true commitment, they turn to God. In order to turn to God, people must realize that they can only come to the Father through Christ. John 14:6 says, “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.’” We want to help our children realize that they need to share verses that make it clear that the only way to come to the Father is through Christ. Peter made this very clear when he was threatened by the Jewish religious leaders. In Acts 4:10-12, we read, “Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” By the time Peter finished his defense, the Jewish religious leaders knew that there was no other way to come to the Father except through Christ.

Peter had already been repeating that same thought every time that He spoke to the people about salvation. On the day of Pentecost, Peter gave this answer in Acts 2:38 when the people asked what they should do, “Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” In his very first sermon after Christ returned to heaven, Peter let the people know that they must come to the Father through Jesus Christ because Christ was the only one that made it possible for them to receive forgiveness of sins.

Peter made this same thing clear in his second recorded sermon. Acts 3:14-19 says, “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come

from the presence of the Lord.” As we see, Peter made it very clear, in this sermon also, that sin can only be removed and blotted out through Christ. People can only come to the Father through Christ.

As Paul talked with the elders at Ephesus and told them how he had trained them to share the Gospel, he said in Acts 20:20-21, “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.” Paul made it very clear that he had shown them publicly and from house to house that people could only come to God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Second, we see that when people make a true commitment, they turn from idols. As you look back at each of the verses mentioned under the first point, you will notice that both Peter and Paul emphasized a second thing in every message. That was the message of repentance. To “repent” means *to turn from sin and to turn to God*. The Thessalonians had developed a true commitment because they had turned from their idols and turned to God. The second time the religious leaders arrested the apostles, Peter spoke for all of the apostles as he said in Acts 5:29-32, “But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.’” Here, the apostles said that Christ came to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Third, we see that when people make a true commitment, they begin to serve the living and true God. The word that is translated “serve” in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 is the word that is used for a “slave”. Titus 3:3 points out the fact that before we came to Christ, we were serving sin as a slave. That verse says, “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” A true commitment to Christ will give us this same desire to serve Christ as a slave. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We want to help our children understand how they can share with others the fact that we have been given liberty by Christ from our bondage to sin and that because of that liberty it is now possible to serve one another in love.

Fourth, we see that when people make a true commitment, they begin to eagerly wait for the return of Christ. Before we became Christians, we were in bondage because of our fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” We want to help our children know how to help others understand that a true commitment to Christ fills our lives with joy because we no longer have to fear death. Titus 2:13-14 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” We also want to help our children

understand that they can wait with expectant joy for the return of Christ.

One of the results of eagerly waiting for the return of Christ is that it causes us to realize that our service here on the earth, as we wait, has a purpose. 1 Corinthians 15:55-58 says, “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” As our children have an eager expectation of the return of Christ, they begin to understand that the Lord has a purpose for their life as they wait for His coming.

Fifth, we see that when people make a true commitment, they focus on the resurrection of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:1-6 says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you--unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep.” As we show our children, by our example, that our purpose while we are here on this earth is to help others know how they can also have forgiveness of sin and receive eternal life, we help them to develop the same purpose and to understand that as we share the message of the resurrection, others will also be drawn to place their trust in Christ.

Sixth, we see that when people make a true commitment, they know that they have been delivered from the wrath to come. Before people place their trust in Christ, they have a fear of what faces them after death. When we make a true commitment to Christ, we are delivered from that fear. Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” We are able to help our children show others how to understand that they no longer need to fear death because they have been set free from the judgment to come. As John 5:24 says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” We help our children to understand how to share three things that Christ promises all those who place their trust in Him: they have everlasting life; they will not have to face the future judgment for sin; they have passed from death to life.

It is a great joy to see our children develop a true commitment to Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children develop such a commitment.