

## 9. Helping Our Children Develop the Example of a Godly Father

In our last topic, we discussed helping our children learn to work with the Holy Spirit by showing them how to provide the care of a nursing mother to new or struggling Christians. Today, we will look at another of the key things that we want to show our children as we help our children learn to provide the example of a godly spiritual father. New or struggling Christians need godly examples that they can follow in their lives. We will study some of the things involved in becoming such examples.

1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 says, “You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.” In these verses, we see three things that we show our physical and spiritual children by our example. Then, we see three ways that we speak to our children based on our example. Finally, we see that our goal is to help our children develop a walk that is worthy of God.

First, we see that we are to be a devout example. The word that is translated “devoutly” or “holily” means *a life that is undefiled by sin*. Here, we see that Paul and the team modeled the way that Christ changes and transforms our lives as we yield the control of our lives to Him. In the same way, our lives are to provide an example of a transformed life to our children so that they can become a similar example to others. Romans 12:2 tells us that transformation begins with the mind. That verse says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Here, we see that we make it our goal to show our children how to think Biblically and help them learn to show others how to think Biblically.

Second, we see that we are to be a just example. The word that is translated “justly” speaks of a life that models obedience to the Lord by keeping the commandments of the Lord. This speaks of a person whose thinking, feeling and actions are in agreement with the will of God. James 1:22 says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” Then, 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” We want to help our children learn to think Biblically, learn to be motivated by the love of Christ and then put into practice in their daily lives obedience to the Word of God. As our children practice obedience to the Word of God, they become an example to others of the way that Christ transforms lives.

Third, we see that we are to be a blameless example. The word that is translated “blamelessly” is only used two times in the New Testament. It means *a life that is free from fault or defect*. The second use of this word is in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 where we read, “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.” Here, we see that the Lord is working in our lives to help us become more like Christ. As we yield to the Lord moment by moment, our lives are becoming more like the life of Christ and others begin to see the transformation that Christ

makes in lives that are yielded to Him. We have the opportunity to provide an example for our children of what it means to grow in the likeness of Christ and as a result they see how the Lord can help them grow and become more like Christ.

Fourth, we see that we are to exhort our children. As we come to 1 Thessalonians 2:11, we see that in addition to providing an example for our children to follow, we explain what makes that example possible by the way that we teach our children. The word that is translated “exhorted” is used 109 times in the New Testament. The word is most commonly translated by the word “beseech” and means *to strengthen by encouraging and comforting*. In 1 Thessalonians 3:2, we read, “And sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith.” Here, we see that Paul had sent Timothy to the Thessalonians to encourage them to continue to grow in their faith.

When Timothy returned to Paul, he gave a report of what was happening in the lives of the Thessalonians. 1 Thessalonians 3:7 says, “Therefore, brethren, in all our affliction and distress we were comforted concerning you by your faith.” In this verse, the word is translated “comforted”. Paul and Silas were comforted and encouraged when they heard about the faith of the Thessalonians from Timothy. The church at Thessalonica had developed a strong faith, hope and love. As Paul wrote this letter, he used this same word in 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 where we read, “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; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.” Here, we see that Paul urged and encouraged them to continue to grow in their love toward one another.

Fifth, we see that we are to comfort our children. The word that is translated “comforted” is only used four times in the New Testament. It is used twice in John 11 where it speaks of the Jews comforting Mary and Martha following the death of their brother Lazarus. Then it is used twice in 1 Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 5:14, we read, “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all.” Here, we see that we are to comfort the fainthearted. A fainthearted person is one that is experiencing fears and doubts in his or her life. Here, we see that we want to show our children how to provide comfort to those who are discouraged and experiencing fears and doubts in their lives due to difficult events such as death in their families. This is a reminder that such individuals need comfort and encouragement not condemnation or a critical spirit.

Sixth, we see that we are to charge our children. The word that is translated “charge” is used 86 times in the New Testament. It means *to bear witness, to give testimony or to affirm something that a person has seen, heard or experienced*. Of the New Testament writers, this word was used most commonly by John in the Gospel of John and in the Epistles of John. In many cases, it was used of those who gave testimony or witness about Christ. The word is used four times in John 5:31-32 where we read, “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness which He witnesses of Me is true.” The word is used four more times in the next eight verses as Christ speaks of various witnesses of the fact that He is the Son of God.

Paul used the word here in 1 Thessalonians 2:11, to point out the fact that he and the other team members had given witness to the Thessalonians in the same way that a father would give witness to his children about the way that they should walk. Here, we see that Paul focused on the way that a father teaches his children the things that are important for those children to learn so that they can live effective lives. Paul had done this same thing as he wrote to the Corinthians. 1 Corinthians 4:14-16 says, “I do not write these things to shame you, but as my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me.” Paul gave instruction and then backed up that instruction by inviting the Corinthians to imitate his example. Paul makes it clear that the instructions that the team had given were very important because they told the Thessalonians how the Lord wanted them to walk.

Seventh, we see that our overall goal is to help our children develop a worthy walk. The word that is translated walk “worthy” is used six times in the New Testament. Ephesians 4:1 says, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.” Then, Colossians 1:10 says, “That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” Philippians 1:27 says, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” As we read these verses, we see that they all have a similar thought.

Our goal as we minister to both our physical and spiritual children is to help them develop a worthy walk that is pleasing to the Lord. These verses show that such a worthy walk will include making it their goal to please the Lord in all that they do. Of course, we can only teach that to our children if the goal of our lives is to please the Lord in all that we do as we go through life. That means that we want to develop both the actions and the words that are pleasing to the Lord so that we can be an example and then teach our physical and spiritual children why we do what we do. As we help our children develop these same attitudes, words and actions, we see that the Lord will work in and through their lives to help them become fruitful in every good work.

As we show our children how to walk worthy of the Lord and help them mature in their spiritual lives so that they become an example to others, the Lord will use their lives to have a powerful impact on the lives of others. Ephesians 3:20-21 says, “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children mature and become an example of a godly father to others.